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OR,
UNRAVELING A TWISTED SKEIN.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "DEN-
VER DOLL" NOVELS, "DEADWOOD
DICK, JR.," NOVELS,
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING ON THE TRAIN.

A MIDNIGHT train was speeding on its way to the great metropolis--New York City. A large portion of its passengers were from the far West or Southwest, but noticeably from the former region.

Among these were two of very striking appearance—one a young man of perhaps five-

DIRECTLY, ONE END OF A ROPE WAS LOWERED INTO THE SEWER, AND, SEIZING FROM HOLD OF IT, DICK WAS DRAWN UP.

and-twenty years, whose long hair and sombrero indicated the denizen of the real wild West.

Possessed of a wiry figure and a handsome, manly face, smoothly shaven, he commanded considerable attention.

The other was a man of at least fifty years, rather corpulent, well dressed, but with hair and beard as white as snow. His was a kindly face, but his eyes were red with weeping, and every now and then he would shake with the emotion which, seemingly, he was unable to repress.

These two sat opposite each other across the aisle, the latter having boarded the train at a way station.

This manifest grief of the elder party seemed to create a feeling of sympathy in the younger, for, reaching across the aisle and touching the elder upon the arm, he said:

"You appear to be in trouble, my friend."

The grief-stricken man closely surveyed his accoster for a moment, and then, arising from his own seat, took the vacant seat beside him.

"Yours is a bright, honest face," he said, in a husky tone of voice, "and I will tell you that I am in trouble—the worst trouble of my life."

"What may be the nature of your trouble, if I might inquire?"

"I have lost my daughter, sir."

"Ah, that is too bad! You have my sympathy, if a stranger's sympathy is any source of condolence. Did she die suddenly?"

"Die? Well, I can hardly say. She very mysteriously disappeared."

"Indeed? An elopement, perhaps?"

"No; I am positive it was not. She had no suitors whatever, as I have been assured on good authority. She finished her education at Vassar College a trifle over a week ago, and immediately telegraphed me of her intention to start for home on the day following her graduation. I waited patiently for her return, but when two days had passed and she did not appear, I grew anxious and telegraphed to Poughkeepsie to ascertain the cause of the delay. In answer, I was informed that she had procured her ticket and started for home at the time she had promised. Since then, nothing has been seen or heard of her, although I have employed the best detective talent in the search for her."

"Rather singular, I should say. Are you sure she left Poughkeepsie?"

"Positive. One of the professors saw her off!"

"Hum! Where do you reside, Mr.—?"

"My name is Vance—Roger Vance—and my residence is in New York City. Here is my card."

He extended a card, which read as follows:

"ROGER VANCE,

"Petroleum Broker,"

"Residence—Lexington avenue, N. Y."

"I have been on another wild-goose chase to-day," and am thoroughly disheartened," he added.

"To New Brunswick?"

"Yes, I read of a suicide there, of a girl that answered to my daughter's description, and I hastened there. But, it was not my child!"

"How old was your daughter, sir?"

"Just eighteen!"

"Her name?"

"Violet!"

"Well, I should think the New York detectives, with all their accredited shrewdness, would be able to get some clew to your daughter's whereabouts. I think if I were posted in your city, I could do it. I've done a little detective work, occasionally, myself, and never lost a case!"

"You don't say so! By Heaven! If you'll find my child, I'll make you a rich man!" the old gentleman cried, excitedly. "What is your name, sir?"

For answer, the young man handed him a card, which bore the inscription:

"RICHARD M. BRISTOL,

"Deadwood Dick, Jr.),

"U. S. Gov't Detective."

"Indeed?" and the broker looked curious. "I have seen the name, somewhere—in literature, I think."

"Very likely, sir."

"So you are a detective, eh? What brings you East—for I infer you are a Western man?"

"So I am. My business in the East is simply a pleasure trip—to see this new world to me."

"Just so. Then there would be nothing in particular to deter you from undertaking the job of hunting up my daughter?"

"No, I believe not."

"Then I wish to employ you. Possibly you might succeed where others have failed!"

"Possibly, but hardly probable, inasmuch as I have no knowledge of New York City. However, if you wish me to look into the matter, I will, as doubtless it will give me a knowledge of the city that would otherwise escape me."

"I do certainly wish you would try and solve the problem of my daughter's disappearance. Whatever your charges may be I will cheerfully pay, as I am a man of abundant means!"

"Oh! the pecuniary part of the business is a secondary consideration!" Dick replied. "What we want to get at, is your daughter's whereabouts!"

"Exactly! But I fear that will be a long and almost hopeless undertaking."

"Let us hope not. Fortune, though dilatory in dealing out her favors, often hands them in when least expected. A few questions, please, Mr. Vance. Is your wife living?"

"No. She died years ago."

"Have you any near relatives living?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"But two."

"What are their names?"

"Pshaw! Why these questions? My relatives, had I a hundred, could have nothing to do with the disappearance of my daughter."

Deadwood Dick immediately put up his pencil and note-book, and leisurely averted his face to the window, gazing out into the flying scenes of the night.

Roger Vance watched him curiously for several minutes in silence, then asked:

"Thinking over the matter?"

"No!" Dick replied. "I have no occasion to."

"But—I don't understand."

"I'll make it plainer, then. If I am to take your case, I must have every one of my questions unhesitatingly answered. If I am debarred the entire confidence of an employer—and I am proud to say I have never betrayed a confidence—I have nothing to do professionally with that case. I consider it my duty, as a sleuth, to have the privilege of sifting the very ashes of circumstances to get my clews. Nine times out of ten I may find nothing but clinkers, then something that leads to the ultimate success of my case."

"By Heaven, you're a good one!" Vance declared, taking off his hat and wiping the perspiration from his brow. "My entire confidence you shall freely have. Ask, and you shall be answered."

"I want the names of your relatives."

"Mrs. Florence Fulton, my own cousin, and Virgie, her daughter."

"Their residence?"

"Number — Crosby street, New York."

"Rather an obscure quarter, or more to the point, rather a low-class quarter of the city, is it not?"

"Well, yes, somewhat so."

"Your cousin and daughter are well off?"

"On the contrary, no. It is my money that contributes mainly to their support."

"What is your actual wealth, Mr. Vance?"

"Well, I presume I could draw checks for half a million, besides which I have estate worth as much more. Then, again, I have a floating fund that I use in oil brokerage, of about ten thousand. This is something I have never made public before."

"How many persons do you employ?"

"Only one, and he is my secretary. I have always made it a practice to transact my business myself. Hence, my success."

"I see. What is the name of your secretary?"

"Felix Franks."

"A person of irreproachable character and habits, I presume?"

"Yes. I'd stake my life on his reliability, and good habits!"

"You would be foolish to do that, as the best of us are but weak compositions of flesh and bone. However, if Mr. Franks has been for a time in your employ, you ought to know as to his true character. In event of your death, and in case your daughter is never found, I suppose your vast wealth would descend to your cousin and her daughter?"

"Most assuredly."

"So I suppose. By the way, have you a personal enemy?"

The broker was silent a moment, in thought, but finally answered.

"No, I don't think I have, unless, possibly, it is one man."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Bill Bruno but he is more commonly known as Bum Boston, from the fact

that he is an inveterate bummer, and hails from the Hub. I employed him, sometime ago, as stableman, but, owing to his bad habits was forced to discharge him, and he left in a bad humor!"

"Well, I don't know as I have much more to ask, at present," Dick said, "except that I would like the addresses of your secretary, and this man, Bum Boston."

"Felix lives, or rather, boards, with my cousin, in Crosby street. My cousin keeps boarders, and then, too, I guess Felix has rather a weakness for Virgie, who is a charming girl. As for Bruno, he is, I believe, a *habitué* of the grog-shop known as the White Grill, Sixth avenue."

"Thanks. As soon as we get in New York, and I am somewhat rested from my long journey, I will look the matter up. I shall first visit Poughkeepsie and begin the search from there."

"Quite an advisable idea, although I don't imagine you will learn more than I did. Use your own judgment, and if you succeed I'll reward you handsomely. In the mean time, here is a hundred dollars, to defray your immediate expenses!"

Dick accepted the proffered note, then a silence ensued, the detective remaining in deep thought as the train dashed on through the starless night.

At last the train rolled into the station at Jersey City, and there Dick and Mr. Vance took the Desbrosses Ferry for the New York side.

Arriving in New York, the broker invited Dick to his residence in Lexington avenue, but as Dick expressed a preference for a hotel, he was recommended to the Bartholdi, whither, after bidding Mr. Vance good-night, he went in a cab.

Thus was the Western Detective Prince practically launched upon a new, and to him novel adventure.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW OF A CLEW.

WHEN Dick arrived at the hotel, he registered, and went direct to his room, for he was very much fatigued, and in a short time was fast asleep.

He was up betimes in the morning, however, and took a long walk through Broadway, sight-seeing.

The huge, majestic buildings, and the dazzling displays in the store windows, were a source of great attraction to him, and it was nearly noon, when he returned to the hotel.

During his perambulations he had purchased a map of the city, and on his arrival at the hotel, he studied it over carefully, and succeeded in getting a good idea of the main avenues and localities of the metropolis.

In the afternoon, he took another pilgrimage, the result of which was that he located the White Grill, on Sixth avenue, and also the residence of Mrs. Fulton, on Crosby street.

These were the first two important items in the case, he assumed.

That night he took in the theater, and thus ended his first day in the great city of New York.

The following morning he made up his mind to go to work on the Vance case, as it would afford him a chance to see more of the city and its true life than he would probably otherwise have.

The first important step was to visit Poughkeepsie, the seat of the celebrated Vassar College, and make inquiries there, concerning Miss Violet Vance.

Accordingly, he took an early train, and was soon steaming along the banks of the romantic Hudson.

In due time he arrived in the academic city and within a short time afterward, was engaged in interviewing the professor under whose charge Miss Vance was particularly placed.

"Yes, I can positively affirm that Miss Vance left for New York, on the 7:50 train, A. M., December 6th," the professor declared, after Dick had made known his errand. "I accompanied her to the depot myself, as did several of her young lady friends, for she was such a charming girl, so apt and *ingenue*, that we all loved her dearly. We saw her aboard the train, bade her good-by, and the train moved off. That is the last I have seen or heard of her, and I am sorely grieved that she has not reached home in safety!"

"Did she have any beaux, while here?" Dick asked.

"Positively no. She was not a barum-scarum girl, and I don't believe she had a male

acquaintance in the town, outside of the college."

"Did she have baggage, on her departure?"

"Oh! yes—a large Saratoga trunk, with her initials on one end. I saw to the checking of it myself, and saw it aboard the train."

"She started December 6th, at 7:50, A. M.?"

"Yes, sir."

"What sort of a looking girl was Miss Vance?"

"A blonde, of medium height and graceful, willowy figure, and very pretty. Indeed, many of our girls were envious of her beauty. She had deep blue eyes, and sunny hair of golden hue, and a pretty mouth tempting enough to kiss—at least, I thought so, old as I am, and being surrounded by a regiment of fair maidens I ought to be somewhat a judge!"

And the professor smiled, good-naturedly.

"By the way," he added, "I think I can prove to you that she was pretty!"

He touched a bell, and a servant appeared.

"Send Miss Leroy!" the professor directed, and the servant departed.

Miss Leroy, herself a ravishing beauty, soon made her appearance.

"Miss Leroy, this is Mr. Bristol a detective, who is in search of Violet. He would like to see your photograph of her," the professor said.

"He can see it, but I would not part with it for the world!"

"Oh! certainly not!" Dick hastened to observe. "That is not necessary. I simply wish to look at the picture."

Miss Leroy left the room, and soon returned with a cabinet photo, which she gave to Dick.

It was the shadow of a remarkably pretty maiden, and Dick studied the face several minutes, in silence, ere he returned the photo to its owner.

"I shall know that face, if I ever see it!" he observed, returning the portrait.

"Have you any tidings of Violet?" Miss Leroy asked.

"None as yet," Dick replied. "There seems to be a great mystery about her disappearance, but I'll solve it, after awhile. Did the young lady have any gentlemen acquaintances, Miss Leroy?"

"No, sir. I never saw her talk to a man but once, and I was her most intimate companion for over a year."

"When was it you saw her in conversation with a man?"

"About a week before she left here?"

"Ha! this may lead to a clue! Who was this man?"

"I do not know. Violet didn't tell me. I simply saw them together, just outside the college grounds."

"Could you describe the individual?"

"Well, not accurately. As I saw him, he was dressed and looked like a fop. He wore a dark, waxed mustache, and I noticed a livid scar on his neck, as if some one had been trying to cut his throat. He also wore a single eyeglass. That's about all I can tell you, except that he wore a high hat."

"How long did Miss Vance converse with him, Miss Leroy?"

"Some ten or fifteen minutes, and after he left, she looked as if she were worried about something, but I didn't venture to question her."

"I think here is the beginning of a red-hot trail, as we say out West!" Dick observed, his brows knitting.

Then, turning abruptly to the professor, he continued:

"How was Miss Vance dressed, on her departure, sir?"

"She wore a handsome sealskin ulster, that reached nearly to her feet, and a peaked hat ornamented with white plumes. How she was attired beneath the ulster, of course I do not know, but presumably in a gray costume, that shade appearing to be a favorite with her!"

"Her sealskin ulster had her full name embroidered on the inside lining," added Miss Leroy.

Dick had been making notes of the foregoing conversation, and next he asked:

"Do you know the name of the conductor of the train, on which Miss Vance departed?"

"Unfortunately I do not. As I reside so far up in this city as the college I am little acquainted with the railway people. Perhaps you could find out at the depot."

So, after thanking his informants, Dick took leave of the great college, where thousands of our brightest girls have received their educations, only to become shining lights in the best society or leading educators in all parts of the Union.

At the depot Dick approached the station-agent, and asked:

"Can you inform me who was the conductor on the 7:50 A. M. train for New York, on December 6?"

"Yes, I can. It was Bob Callahan."

"Can you inform me where I will find him, sir?"

"He's up in Albany, now. He'll be along here at the usual time, to-morrow morning, barring sickness or accidents."

"He runs through to New York, I suppose?"

"He does."

Thanking the agent, Dick waited in the station until the next train for New York came along, and then embarked.

"I have made a beginning, at least," he mused, while being whirled along over the rails, "but, how long the trail is, is a question not easily decided. It strikes me there is considerable significance in Violet Vance's conversation with the eye-glassed stranger, and the matter may have some connection with the case I have in hand. Anyhow, when to-morrow comes, I must interview Mr. Bob Callahan. From him I likely can learn if Miss Vance went through to New York, on his train. People don't commonly wear sealskin ulsters and he may remember her. After interviewing Callahan, I have another move in view. The prices of the Hotel Bartholdi are too rich for my blood, and I reckon I'll take up accommodations with Mrs. Fulton, of Crosby street. It might prove profitable."

CHAPTER III.

A VISIT TO THE GRILL.

WHEN Dick arrived back in the metropolis, it was well on toward night, as he spent his time strolling about town, as he had a desire to get better acquainted with the city.

He paid a visit to the Bowery, with its many giddy attractions, and finally brought up at the post-office on Broadway, as he wished to procure some stamps.

After making his purchase, he was about to return up-town, when he espied a young lady in deadly peril.

In attempting to cross Broadway, she had become hedged in between trucks, carriages and street-cars, and was in imminent danger of being trampled down beneath the horses' feet.

At once dashing forward, Dick pressed a span of coach-horses back upon their haunches, and snatched the young woman literally from the jaws of death, as a furiously-driven span of car-horses were almost upon her.

Assisting the lady he had rescued to the sidewalk, Dick there released hold of her.

She was beautifully formed, and richly attired, and wore a costly sealskin ulster that reached nearly to her feet.

Dick's sharp eyes did not fail to make note of this fact, and he surveyed the womanly keenly, but did not make out much, as the upper part of her face was concealed by a veil, that in the gloom of dusk obscured her features.

"Oh, sir!" she said, in a tremulous voice, "I am very much obliged to you. If I only knew how ever I could repay you, I—"

"Don't mention such a thing!" Dick hastened to say. "I am very glad I happened to be able to rescue you from being trampled under foot. You had a narrow escape!"

"I did, indeed, and but for your act, I should have been hurt—perhaps killed. I was hedged in on all sides, and did not know what to do. Again, I wish to express my everlasting gratitude. Here is my card. If you will call, I am sure mamma will be pleased to extend to you her sincere thanks also."

She thrust a card into Dick's hand, and hurried away.

As it was getting too dark to decipher what was on the card, Dick thrust it into his pocket, and continued on up Broadway.

Instead of going direct to the hotel, he concluded to pay a visit to the White Grill, on Sixth avenue, for the purpose of getting a look at Bum Boston, providing that worthy should chance to be around.

Reaching the designated place, Dick found it to be a saloon and chop-house combined; a gilded place, frequented by both sexes, the female element being fully of as questionable a character as the male.

Both men and women were drinking freely, and there clung about the place an odor of onions, garlics, and beer.

The place was well fitted up, brilliantly lighted, and well calculated to attract the attention of any out-of-town citizen with a fat pocket-book.

Procuring a beverage at the bar, Dick seated himself at one of the tables, and ordered an oyster stew.

He at once became an object of universal scrutiny; but, as he paid no particular attention to any one, he was not molested.

It is one of the rules of the house that any stranger who does not attempt to "mash" the "lady" patrons, is to be let severely alone.

Among the considerable audience present, Dick saw but one person who he thought might answer to the name of Bill Bruno, otherwise Bum Boston.

He was a large-proportioned man, with a bloated face and bloodshot eyes. He wore a dark mustache of the brigandish order, and the end of his nose looked decidedly as if "the town had been painting it red."

In company with several others, he was drinking, while the party discussed politics in a manner more forcible than polite, but Dick failed to catch the name of the big fellow."

So when he had finished his stew, he arose to depart.

At this juncture the curtained front door opened, and a newsboy entered with a bundle of papers under his arm.

He was probably about fourteen years old, but small of his age, and ragged and dirty. His face, however, was an intelligent one, the eyes being especially keen and brilliant.

"News! Evening Sun!" he cried. "All about the railroad accident!"

The big man wheeled around from the bar, with an oath.

"Get out of here, you young imp! Didn't I tell you not to show up in here any more?" he cried, and with that he gave the newsboy a brutal kick, that caused him to scream with pain, and retreat from the saloon.

Deadwood Dick was "riled" in a minute, and stepped quickly forward.

"See here, sir, that wasn't a fair deal!" he cried, facing the bummer. "What kind of a man are you, to kick a mere child? You ought to be flogged within an inch of your life, you big brute!"

This coming from an utter stranger, and one who was so much inferior in size, caused the big man to stare.

Then, after a second, he broke forth into a torrent of imprecations.

"Why, curse your picture, what's it your business what I do? I reckon I'm just the sort of a Jersey Lily as can do you, if you do wear long hair, and carry revolvers in your boots; and if you don't clear out of the saloon in double-quick order, I'll smash you so your mother won't know you!"

"Yes, and I'll help you," cried George Pote, the "bouncer" of the establishment—a red-headed individual with a game leg, who looked as if he couldn't bounce a baby.

"Oh! I've heard men talk, but talk is cheap, and a drug on the market!" Dick replied calmly. "I don't pose as a pugilist or a fighter, but, understand that, although I propose to leave this saloon as soon as it suits my convenience, I don't fear one or the both of you!"

"Ye don't, eh?" roared the big man. "Then I'll make you!"

With that he lunged forward, and aimed a vicious blow at the sombrero-covered head.

Dick, quite prepared for the onslaught, gave the bully a terrific blow in under the ear, that floored him, and rendered him insensible.

Such a scientific knock-out in one round, the patrons of the Grill had seldom if ever seen, and a murmur of astonishment went up.

Dick turned next to Pote, the "bouncer."

"Now, sir, I can accommodate you, limpy," he coolly announced.

"Not much you don't!" Pote declared, skulking behind the bar. "I'm not looking for a scrape, just now, you bet!"

"Oh! very well! I thought you was more bluster than bite!" Dick declared. "When the big ruffian here comes to his senses, you'd better soak his head in a solution of strong lye. Good-night, gents!"

And turning, he left the saloon, probably leaving behind him the impression that "Western man muchee bad medicine!"

Outside Dick found the newsboy who received the brutal kick. He was still crying piteously, and shivering with the cold.

"There, don't cry, my boy!" Dick said, patting him on the shoulder. "Did the brute hurt you bad?"

"You bet he did!" was the reply. "I never got such a kick in my life!"

"Well, I punished him for it, by knocking him senseless!"

"Get out! There ain't no one in the ward

can lick Bum Boston!" the boy cried, incredulously.

"Well, I did, just the same. What's your name, sonny?"

"Everybody calls me Rats!"

"Well, Rats, I see you are shivering with the cold. Here's a half-dollar. Take it, and go and get yourself a good warm meal, and you will feel better."

"Thanks, sir," the boy said, accepting the coin, and bounding away like a shot.

"So that was Bum Boston, eh?" muttered Dick, as he trudged along toward the hotel. "Well, he's certainly none too good for mischief!"

CHAPTER IV.

TRACED TO NEW YORK.

THE next morning Dick was up bright and early, and after a hearty breakfast repaired to the Grand Central Depot in Forty-second street, to await the train that should bring Conductor Bob Callahan to New York.

During his wait Dick engaged in conversation with one of the station-men, who promised to point out Callahan on his arrival.

It was nearly half-past nine when the Albany Express pulled into the depot, and it was full fifteen minutes later eye Dick had the satisfaction of seeing Bob Callahan.

The conductor was a well-built, portly man, and possessed of a genial countenance, so that Dick felt no hesitation in approaching him.

After introducing himself, the detective came direct to the point.

"Mr. Callahan," he said, "did you conduct the train from Albany on the 6th instant?"

"I did, sir."

"Do you, as a rule, remember the faces or peculiarities of your passengers?"

"Oh, if there is anything strikingly peculiar about their appearance, I generally notice the fact."

"So I supposed. Do you remember of having among your passengers on the 6th a beautiful young lady, who wore a long sealskin coat?"

"Perfectly well. She got on at Poughkeepsie."

"Exactly. That's the very party I am looking for. Did she come straight through to New York, or did she leave the train at some station along the route?"

"She came through to New York. I assisted her to alight from the cars. She had been a frequent passenger on my train, either coming from or going to Vassar, and we were pretty well acquainted. I sometimes wished I had not married quite so early in life."

And here the conductor smiled broadly, adding:

"If Mrs. Bob C— were to hear that, there would be red-headed war in the camp."

"Do you know anything about what became of Miss Vance, after she reached New York?" was Dick's next interrogative.

"No more than that she said she was returning home after having graduated. When we arrived in New York, I saw her into the waiting-room and left her there, and that's the last I've seen of her. But why all these questions?"

"Miss Vance is missing, and has not been home at all."

"The deuce you say! Why, that's mighty strange."

"Right you are. Mr. Vance is terribly worried, and I am trying to set matters to rights, but it is evident I have got a big job ahead of me."

"Yes, it rather looks like it. I'm mighty sorry to hear of the young lady's disappearance, and if in my leisure moments, I can do anything toward helping to find her, I will do so."

"Thank you. I'll tell you what you might do," Dick said, thoughtfully. "You might make inquiries among the cabmen about the depot. Some one of them ought to remember, especially if she took a cab for home, which most likely she did. And you might also make some inquiries about her baggage. You would probably have more success in the matter than I."

"By Jove! I'll look up the matter this very day," Callahan assented. "As you say, the cabmen ought to know something about her, and I know every mother's son of them."

"Very well. If you find any news, drop me a note to the Hotel Bartholdi. I'm in hopes you may be able to gain some information from the cabmen."

"I shall try hard, you can bet," the genial conductor declared, heartily. "It strikes me the girl has been abducted, and if such is the case, no efforts must be spared to find her."

"You are right. It is my idea, too, that she

has been kidnapped, but by whom is yet a mystery which I hope to solve."

Dick then left the depot, and returned downtown.

On his arrival at the hotel, he found Mr. Vance waiting for him.

The broker's face was pale and haggard, and it was evident he had passed sleepless nights since Dick had seen him last.

"Well, my boy, how goes it—what's the news?" he cried, seizing Dick eagerly by the hand. "Is there any hope?"

"Dead loads of it!" Dick replied. "While there's life there's always hope, you know, as the old saying goes."

"Ah! then you have made no discoveries?" and an expression of bitter disappointment mantled the broker's face.

"On the contrary I have," Dick replied. "I have traced your daughter as far as the Grand Central Depot, in New York."

"Explain! explain!" Mr. Vance cried, excitedly.

Dick did so, narrating in detail his experience, and what he had learned, from the time he had started for Poughkeepsie.

Mr. Vance listened attentively.

"But, if she reached New York, why did she not return home?" he demanded.

"In my opinion she was kidnapped."

"What! in broad daylight?"

"Cases of the sort have been known to occur in large cities."

"True. But who could have had an object in abducting my poor Violet?"

"That remains to be seen. The trail at present ends at the depot, but I may be able to pick it up, nevertheless."

"God grant that you may!" Mr. Vance exclaimed, fervently. He soon after took his departure.

"Now then, for a visit to Mrs. Fulton. I have a great curiosity to see that lady," Dick decided in his own mind.

And a very laudable curiosity it was!

CHAPTER V.

OVERHEARD THROUGH THE KEYHOLE.

To Crosby street Dick accordingly went.

The residence of Mrs. Fulton was the best-appearing of any of the tenements in the vicinity, the exterior having recently been repainted, thereby giving it a freshened look that was hard in contrast with the other dingy tenements near by.

A sign of:

"BOARDING AND LODGING,"

ornamented the front door; clean lace curtains covered the windows, and, altogether, there was an air of refinement about the house.

In answer to Dick's ring, a matronly-looking woman of favorable appearance came to the door.

"I see you keep boarders," Dick said. "Have you a vacancy for one more?"

"Yes, providing you can give a recommend!" was the reply. "We, as a rule, want to know whom we are entertaining."

"Oh! certainly; but, being a Western man, I have very few acquaintances. I think the only person to whom I could conscientiously refer you, would be Mr. Roger Vance, of — Lexington avenue. I have had some business connection with him, and no doubt he would cheerfully recommend me."

"Mr. Vance?" exclaimed the lady. "Why, that is my cousin, sir. Pray, walk right in, for I am sure you are welcome, if you know Roger!"

And Dick found himself ushered into a cosy sitting-room, where a bright fire burned in the grate.

Both he and Mrs. Fulton became seated, and the buxom little widow chatted away as freely as though she had known Dick all her life.

The result was that Dick was not long in forming the conclusion that Mrs. Fulton was about the last person in the world to enter into a conspiracy against her cousin or his daughter, for whom she seemed to entertain the strongest affection.

Dick was assigned a nicely-furnished back room on the second floor, and there he spent the remainder of the day in deliberation.

"I believe Mrs. Fulton has nothing whatever to do in the matter of Miss Vance's disappearance!" he decided. "She seems to be an open-hearted, good-natured woman, and I hardly feel like suspecting her. Who, then, am I to look to? There's the question. If the Fultons are not to be suspected, the trail is darker than ever!"

When the supper-bell rung, he went downstairs to the dining-room, where he found Mrs.

Fulton and two other persons, whom she introduced respectively as her daughter, Virgie, and her other boarder, Mr. Felix Franks.

Dick was much surprised when he saw Virgie, for in face she was almost the very counterpart of Violet Vance's photograph!

Every feature, the eyes, the manner of wearing the hair, every facial expression was like that of Violet Vance!

Miss Fulton seemed equally surprised at sight of Deadwood Dick, for she started violently, and looked confused.

As for Mr. Felix Franks, he was hardly the sort of man the detective had expected to encounter. He was tall, exceedingly slim, with a sallow-pale face, features thin and of an unmistakable Jewish cast, eyes small and ferret-like, and tow-colored hair, while, under his hooked nose grew a mustache that was waxed out to a nicety, at the ends.

He also wore a single eyeglass, which, together with his flashy dress and lavish display of jewelry, gave him the decided appearance of a fop.

He surveyed Dick with rather an insolent stare, as they were introduced, and stiffly inclined his head.

As for Virgie Fulton, she seemed greatly agitated, and turning to her mother, she said:

"Mamma, I have met this gentleman before!"

"You have? Why, where was that dear! I am sure you must be mistaken."

"No, I am not. He is the gentleman who so heroically rescued me from beneath the horses' feet, down by the Post-office."

"Indeed? Is this true, sir?" and the widow turned to Deadwood Dick.

"Really, I don't know. The lady I rescued was veiled, so that I could not make out her features. However, she gave me her card, which, until now, I have neglected to examine. No doubt that will tell the tale."

He took the card from his pocket and glanced at it. It bore the name and address of Miss Virgie Fulton.

"Yes, it must have been Miss Fulton whom I was fortunate enough to rescue!" Dick said, looking up. "I had not thought of the card, nor of the rescue, up to the present time, owing to a pressure of other business."

"Well, be that as it may, if you were the brave man who rescued my daughter you have my heartfelt gratitude, and are thrice welcome to our home."

They then sat down to tea, and Dick thoroughly enjoyed the most tempting repast he had had set before him for many a day.

During the meal he was cordially entertained by both the landlady and her daughter, and made to feel quite at home.

Felix Franks, however, maintained an absolute silence, evidently not enjoying the attention that was bestowed upon the new boarder.

After supper, having procured a night-key, Dick betook himself out about town.

"The Fultons are all right, I guess, and I must turn my attention in some other direction. For a certainty, this girl Virgie is the very counterpart of Vance's daughter's picture. I must mention the fact to the old man, when I see him. It's mighty singular that the two should so positively resemble each other."

"Then, there's that fellow, Franks. I don't like the cut of his jib, as the sailors say, and I don't imagine he's overly in love with me. He's Vance's private secretary, eh? Humph! I wouldn't employ him to act as secretary for a dump-cart. And it strikes me that I've heard of him before. In person he tallies almost exactly with that of the fellow seen at Vassar, engaged in conversation with Miss Vance, and there is but little doubt in my mind but what he is the same chap. If so, it behooves me to look to him for some tidings of the young lady's whereabouts. He may be running a mercenary plot, all on his own hook. There's a hang-dog look about him, anyhow, that, despite his duds appearance, argues unfavorable for him. He is my spot-man, for the present."

With nothing particular on his hands, to help pass away time, Dick spent the evening at a neighboring theater, and it was after eleven o'clock when he returned to the Fulton residence.

As the house was dark, and the occupants evidently in bed, he admitted himself and stole up to his room, noiselessly.

As soon as he had entered his own apartment, however, he became aware that there were parties in the next room, who had not yet retired, for he heard a voice exclaim, angrily:

"Curse the fellow, I wish he had not come here! He looks just like a man likely to pry into other people's business."

"That's Felix Franks's voice!" Dick mused, "and I reckon he refers to me. So, it behooves me to overhear what transpires. Felix, I'm your man!"

There was a door that led from Dick's room into the adjoining one, but it was now closed.

Quietly seating himself by the door, Dick assumed an easy position, with his ear near the keyhole, and proceeded to listen to the conversation carried on in the next apartment.

The remark made by the man, was answered by a feminine voice, which the detective was surprised to recognize as belonging to Virgie Fulton.

"Oh, pshaw, Felix, you're fretting without cause. There's nothing to be feared from Mr. Bristol. He is very quiet and gentlemanly, I am sure."

"Still waters run deep, and there's no telling what the fellow is. These Western devils are just as apt to cut a man's throat when he sleeps as not. So I want you to tell your mother to fire him."

"Oh! she wouldn't do that, I know. She thinks he is both a gentleman and a hero, and if I were to ask her to send him away she would be very indignant—for didn't he nobly come to my rescue?"

"Nobly come to your rescue be hanged! See here, Virgie, do you mean to play me false?" and the man's tones were angry and menacing.

"Play you false, Felix? Why, certainly not. What ever put such an idea into your head? Don't you know I love you?"

"Humph! so you say! But I fancy you share the old woman's gratitude, as you choose to term it, toward this stranger of the big hat."

"I do feel grateful to him for saving my life. But that does not change my feelings toward you!"

"Maybe not, but you need not feel quite so grateful, or I'll shake you!"

"You dare not!"

"What, do you threaten me?"

"If you wish to take it so. You know you dare not throw me aside at this stage of the game, and I know it full as well as you. So act sensibly."

"So I am doing, but I insist that you have no more to do with that Western cuss!"

"Very well. Your wishes shall be respected, so dismiss the matter from your mind. How near have you got things in readiness?"

"Very near. Are you ready?"

"Yes. I have already notified mother of our approaching marriage, and our immediate departure for a three years' stay on the continent, and she seems delighted that I should have drawn such a nice ticket in the lottery!"

And here the young woman burst into a peal of laughter—rather cynical laughter, too, it occurred to the listener in the next room.

"Hush your noise!" Franks growled. "You don't know who may be listening, and if you don't look out you'll give the whole business away, yet. I must be going, now, as I have a plenty to do, to-morrow. Be on your guard, and in a few days, everything will be in ready for our—our departure. Above all fight shy of this Westerner, and have nothing to do with him. He is at best but an ignorant lout, and no associate for you; and then, too, I've an idea he didn't stumble on your mother's residence for the sole purpose of obtaining board. It is quite possible he may have had a more potent object in coming here. Be on your guard, to-morrow."

Then, there was an exchange of kisses, and the twain left the room, and went down-stairs.

Soon after, the slamming of a door, announced that Franks had left the house.

CHAPTER VI. THE INTERVIEW.

DEADWOOD DICK then retired to his bed, but not to sleep. His mind was too busy for that.

"It's lucky I overheard that conversation," he mused, "for I have got hold of some interesting points, even though they may not apply to the case. Obviously, this worthy couple is to get married, and go abroad on an extended bridal tour; at least, so the Widow Fulton is to be led to understand. In reality, the aforesaid worthy couple are going to do nothing of the kind—that is, so far as the bridal trip is concerned, although it may be their intention to get married."

"The girl, Virgie, said she was not going to back out at this stage of the game, which makes it patent that she and Franks are concerned in some conspiracy of more or less magnitude. Then, too, Franks's uneasiness in regard to my self seems to prove that he fears discovery,

whatever his little game may be. Now, what is the game? That's something I am desirous of knowing.

"Can it be that Franks and his affianced have conspired against Violet Vance, and her father? Knowing as much as I do already, nothing seems more natural. Franks is Vance's private secretary, and knows all his business. He could easily work up a conspiracy against his employer, and, through an aide, force the old man to dip deep down into his coffers, and produce the shekels."

"But why should he choose Virgie Fulton as his copartner? The plot may be even deeper than I suspect; but, anyhow, I am satisfied of one thing, and that is that the widow is in no-wise associated in the scheme, whatever it may be."

"At all events, it behooves me to keep a watch on this precious scheming pair, so as to be able to frustrate their plans, if I find them villainous."

The next morning Dick concluded to pay a visit to Roger Vance's Lexington avenue residence, which was but a comparatively short ride, by taking the Third Avenue Elevated Road.

Arrived at the Thirty-fourth street station, he left the cars, and a short walk brought him to the Vance residence, which was one of the pretentious structures of the wealthy thoroughfare.

As he mounted the steps, a lad came out of the house, hurried down to the street, and hastened away—a ragged, dirty-faced urchin, whom Dick instantly recognized as Rats, the newsboy, whose cause Dick had espoused at the White Grill on Sixth avenue.

The boy was out of sight, around the corner, in a jiffy, or the detective would have hailed.

"I wonder what brought the young ragamuffin to the broker's house?" Dick muttered, as he rung the bell. "Some prime object must have brought him here, I'll agree."

When the servant appeared he presented his card, and was directly ushered into a magnificently furnished parlor, where Mr. Vance was pacing the floor excitedly, his face flushed, and his manner excited.

"By heaven! detective, I am glad to see you!" he cried, rushing forward, and grasping Dick by the hand. "I was just about to send for you."

"Why, what is the matter, Mr. Vance? You appear excited."

"I am excited. I never was more excited in my life."

"But why? Has anything happened?"

"Yes, there has. Read this for an explanation!"

And he handed Dick a sheet of note-paper, which had been crumpled in his grasp.

The letter was written in a coarse, unbusiness-like hand, and ran as follows:

"NEW YORK, December 14, 18—.

"ROGER VANCE, ESQ.:—

"A young lady, said to be insane, has been placed in my hands, for shipment to the island of Formosa. I have learned her name, and also your name—hence I write you.

"Now, as a matter of course, I have been paid a good sum to spirit this girl away, but I am a man of few scruples, and if I can make more by leaving the girl at home I shall do so. Money's what makes the mare go, and my equine has been a mighty poor traveler for some time past. So if you don't want your daughter to go to China and fall in love with a pig-tail, you will no doubt hasten to come to terms.

"My terms are not harsh, as you will observe. All I require is ten thousand dollars in greenbacks. Now, as you are at least a millionaire, you will admit this is a very small sum for the repossession of your offspring.

"My terms are emphatic and unchangeable, and you will be benefited by bearing that in mind. It will be the height of folly for you to seek to find me out by police or detective aid, as I am prepared for all such measures, and shall promptly thwart them.

"My ship leaves the harbor for Rio during the night, but is billed for entirely another port, so you couldn't pick her out, if you tried. Among the hundreds of craft in New York Harbor at present it would take you a week, backed by the police force, to determine the right vessel. By that time the right ship will be far out at sea.

"So you see I have you any way you want to look at it. Your only way is to come to my terms, or have your daughter spirited away to a foreign land, from which she will not be likely soon to return. If you wish to deal with me, come, alone, to the pier directly at the foot of Twenty-eighth street. North River, to-night, at twelve o'clock sharp, and bring ten thousand dollars in bank bills with you. On receipt of that sum I will land your daughter on shore within an hour's time. Bring no police, detectives or other aid with you, for it will be perfectly useless. I have spies out, and any such action on your part will be frustrated, as I shall remain

invisible, and my ship will sail at the appointed hour.

"It's ten thousand dollars, or no daughter; so you will consult your own judgment how to act in the matter. Remember, to-night at twelve o'clock sharp. First and last call.

"Very truly yours,

"CAPT. MARLINSPIKE."

There was no change in the expression of Deadwood Dick's features, as he perused the letter and handed it back to the broker.

"I am not particularly surprised," he said, taking a seat, Mrs. Vance following his example.

"You are not surprised?" echoed the broker.

"No. I have been rather expecting something of the sort. I've had an idea all along that your daughter was kidnapped for the sake of extorting money from you, and this letter proves it."

"But this letter states, or rather intimates, that the seaman received my daughter from other parties, who wanted her carried away to sea."

"The writer of the letter may or may not tell the truth."

"Well, something must be done, and I suppose there is nothing left for me but to submit to the demand."

"Nothing of the sort!" Dick replied.

"But, sir, you see what the letter says. If I do not pay the sum, my poor child will be carried off to China."

Dick smiled vaguely.

"Don't you believe it," he enjoined. "If your daughter was captured for the sole purpose of exacting a ransom, her captors will never take her away as far as that. Neither will they yield her up for any such sum as this letter states. Their idea will be to bleed you for the first payment, and still hold the girl in order to bleed you still further. It's a deep game, and there's more than one hand in it. I've a notion, too, that there's more back of it than just the kidnapping for money."

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Maybe not, and it is hardly necessary that you should until I get my plans matured. I am of the opinion that I am digging at the roots of a plot without parallel, and if I am right, I'll treat you to one of the biggest surprises of your life, shortly. But you must not pay any attention to this letter."

"Man, this is madness! Do you suppose I can sit idly here and allow my daughter to be carried off to a foreign land?" the broker cried, indignantly. "Never, sir! not if it cost ten times the amount demanded to ransom her!"

"Nonsense!" Dick retorted, coolly. "Your daughter will not be carried out of New York Harbor, even if she is on shipboard, which I seriously doubt. The letter is but a preliminary bluff to extort money from you, and if you pay no attention to it more will follow, and in this way I shall be able, no doubt, to get more positively on the trail. If you persist in paying over your money to some mercenary scoundrel, you'll lose your money without receiving any return for it, and will also lose my services."

Roger Vance looked sullen and uncomfortable.

He was not accustomed to being talked to in this peremptory manner, and it irritated him.

"Well, have your own way!" he retorted. "If my daughter is carried off, you will be to blame, and I shall hold you responsible!"

"I will accept the responsibility," Dick replied, promptly. "Although I have engaged with you in the capacity of a detective, Mr. Vance, I am by no means a beggar. On very short notice I can command a much larger sum of money than you may suppose, and in case your daughter is carried away, I will charter a vessel and search the world over, if necessary, but what I will find her. Is not that satisfactory?"

"Yes!" the broker said, rather reluctantly. "I will let you go your lengths, but I have little hopes of your success."

"Oh! I have!" Dick replied, confidently. "I am pretty positive I have struck the key-note of the tune that is being played on you. Have you a late photo of your daughter, sir?"

"Yes, and an excellent one, too!" and rising, and going to a what-not, the broker brought a cabinet photo and gave it to Dick.

The young detective uttered an exclamation of simulated surprise, as he gazed at it.

"Why, this is not your daughter!" he ejaculated.

"I'd like to know whose else's daughter it is," was the curt response.

"But, sir, it is the perfect image of my new landlady's daughter—of Miss Virgie Fulton!"

Vance's face expressed his surprise.

"You boarding there?" he exclaimed.

"Well, yes. The prices of a first-class hotel were a little above what I cared to pay, and, as you mentioned that your cousin kept boarders, I concluded to give her establishment a trial."

"You're a deep one!" the broker allowed.

"You had a two-fold object in going there?"

"Perhaps—perhaps not," Dick replied, nonchalantly. "At any rate, if I had when I went, I have found your cousin to be an amiable and entertaining lady."

"Yes, Maria is a good-hearted soul, and no one can say aught ill of her. So you are struck by the resemblance between her daughter and mine!"

"Truly, I am. I cannot detect a particle of difference between them, and my eyes are pretty keen where studying faces is concerned. Could you tell them apart, sir?"

"Well, of late years, as I have grown older, I will confess that I have often been somewhat puzzled, for they are alike as two peas. Parental instinct would come to my aid, however, and intuitively I could pick out my own offspring."

"I don't think I could distinguish the difference between them. They are alike as two peas. By the way, Mr. Vance, how did you come into possession of this note, referring to the ransom?"

"It was delivered by a ragged street urchin, whom I never saw before. I asked him if there was to be an answer, and he said no, and hastened away. After I read the letter, I was sorry I did not detain him!"

"I know him!" Dick replied. "I visited the White Grill, on Sixth avenue, and while there the lad entered, selling papers, and was brutally kicked by your former employee, Bum Boston. I knocked the loafer down, and dared the crowd to tackle me, but they hadn't the sand to do it!"

"I marvel at that. It's a tough crowd that hangs out there, numbering among others, Pete, the horse tout; Bart Clancy, the confidence-man; Frisco Bill, the gambler, and 'Colonel' Rider, the coacher. They all travel hand in hand, and you were lucky to escape a thrashing or worse."

"Oh! I can most generally take care of number one!" Dick assured. "As for this urchin, whose pseudonym is Rats, I shall make it a point to hunt him up. He may be able to put me onto the trail of the party who sent the letter."

"Very true. The idea is a good one. Make haste, detective, for I cannot rest while my poor child remains in captivity."

"I shall not let the grass grow under my feet, rest assured!"

Just then the door-bell rung.

"Ah! that is my secretary, Mr. Franks," the broker said. "I will introduce you."

"No need of that, as I have already met him at your cousin's," Dick said, briefly.

At the juncture, Franks entered the parlor.

He stared, at sight of Deadwood Dick, and nodded, stiffly; then, bowed graciously to the broker.

"Did you wish to see me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Felix, I want you to set to work, at once, and give the books a thorough overhauling, in as quick time as possible. I am about to take in a partner, and want everything shipshape. Or, if the work will be too much for you, I will employ an expert to assist you."

"Oh! no, there's not the slightest necessity of that!" Franks hastened to assure. "I can easily do the work, as there is in fact but very little to do, I recently having given the books a thorough overhauling. Who is your proposed partner, Mr. Vance, may I ask?"

"Steele Standish!"

"Ah! I believe I have met the gentleman!" Franks replied; and there was a touch of sarcasm in his voice, it struck Dick.

"Very well, Mr. Vance, I will see to the books at once. Good-day, sir!"

And bowing, the secretary left the room.

"A splendid fellow is Felix!" the broker commented. "Always punctual and reliable."

Dick did not reply, for at heart he could not agree with Vance in regard to Franks's "splendid" qualities.

The secretary had barely left the house, when the door-bell rung again, and directly a second visitor was ushered into the parlor.

He was a well-built young man of about Dick's own age, with a fair, handsome face, blue eyes, and blonde hair and mustache. He was well dressed, and altogether, an attractive-looking fellow.

"Ah! is it you, Standish!" the broker said, arising, shaking hands with him. "Allow me

to make you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Bristol, from the West. Mr. Bristol, Mr. Steele Standish, my future business partner."

The two young men exchanged greetings, and then all became seated.

"Any news of your daughter, Mr. Vance?" Standish asked.

"Well, yes, but not very pleasant news, though. My daughter has been kidnapped, and is now in the hands of a mercenary, who demands a ransom of ten thousand dollars for her!"

"Will you give it?"

"Yes. But for one thing, I think I should. Mr. Bristol insists that I shall not, and as he has taken charge of the case, I feel in duty bound to act in accordance with his wishes. Here is the letter. Read it, and let's hear what you think of it!"

Steele Standish took the letter, and perused it carefully.

"I think it is a diabolical outrage!" he said, when he had finished—"a cleverly-concocted scheme to extort money from you. If I'm any judge, this Captain Marlinspike, whoever he may be, is but a tool in the hands of other parties, used to carry out the dirty work of their game."

"What would you advise me to do?"

"Nothing at all. I agree with Mr. Bristol, that it would not be advisable for you to pay any attention to the letter!"

"But, my daughter! She will be carried off to sea!"

"Don't you believe it, sir. If your daughter was kidnapped to make money, she won't be taken far away. As long as the scoundrels have a hope of extorting money from you, they will have their captive handy for delivery."

"No, sir! don't you go near this Marlinspike, nor give up a penny of ransom money. What with your detective's efforts, and my own, providing I can be of any service to him, we will find your daughter yet, and baffle the parties of the rascally scheme."

"Your head is level there, Mr. Standish!" Dick heartily declared, "and I shall be glad to have your co-operation. I think I have just the position in which to place you. But of that, more anon. I must now be going, as I have some big figuring to do. I will keep this photo of your daughter for a few days, but will return it to you later. It may be of use to me."

"Very well, sir. I have a couple besides it." Bidding them good-day, Deadwood Dick withdrew.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK BEGINS TO GET THINGS DOWN FINE.

"WELL!" Dick mused, when he was once on the street, "it seems that a little light is beginning to peep through the clouds, although it peeps exceeding small. I have found out but little yet, but I have certainly well opened the case."

"I am convinced that Felix Franks is a crook, and is being abetted by Virgie Fulton. This Franks fears me, and dislikes the idea of Steele Standish becoming Mr. Vance's partner. Why should he? Will Standish be in his way? Is the ferret-eyed secretary secretly swindling his partner? It looks so, by Jove! Then, too, I cannot shake off the impression that Felix and Virgie are concerned in the kidnapping of Violet. At any rate, as soon as I can see Steele Standish, I shall set him to watching Franks's movements. Even though the fellow may not be at all concerned in Virgie's disappearance, he will bear watching, judging by the conversation I overheard last night!"

"As for myself, I must find Rats, and pump him. I may be able to get a good deal of information out of him."

To find Rats, and think of finding him, were two different things, as the young detective soon found out. He visited the vicinity of the White Grill saloon, and watched about the neighborhood for full two hours, but without seeing anything of the gamin.

Dick then approached a policeman, and introduced himself, at the same time exhibiting his badge.

The officer at once became all attention.

"I am looking for a newsboy, who goes by the nickname of Rats!" Dick explained. "Can you tell me where I'll be apt to find him?"

"Dunno where he lives. He's generally around here selling papers nights and mornin's," was the reply.

"Then I'd be apt to catch him to-night?"

"Reckon you would—betwixt four and six. What's the young skunk been doing?"

"Oh, nothing. He has some news for me,

that's all. By the way, do you know of a man named William Bruno, also known as Bum Boston?"

"Do I? Well, I guess I do! He's the worst customer on my beat!"

"Tough nut, eh?"

"Tough ain't no name for it. He's been over to the Island three times, to my knowledge, and he's given me plenty of trouble."

"Where does he generally hang out?"

"Guess he spends most of his time over there at the Grill."

"I mean, where does he board?"

"Can't say as to that. He used to live with Old Mag the Fright, in Hester street, when I was on that beat."

"Do you remember the number?"

"Yes; No. —."

"Thank you!" and Dick turned away.

There was nothing now to do particularly until the approach of night when it was Dick's intention to have an interview with Rats.

Night was still a good distance away, however, and so Dick took a stroll through Third avenue and the Bowery.

It was passing through this latter illustrious thoroughfare that he espied two persons conversing together in front of a saloon.

He recognized them at once as Bum Boston, the tough, and Roger Vance's secretary, Mr. Felix Franks.

The discovery gave Dick a start, and caused him to conceal himself where he could see without being easily seen himself.

"Here's a go!" he muttered. "So those two worthies are acquaintances, eh? Well, well! That settles it positively in my mind as to who are Violet Vance's captors! At last I have stumbled onto the right trail, as sure as my name is Dick Bristol. Oh! you're busy posting books, ain't you, Felix Franks? You're the prompt, reliable man your employer thinks you? By Jinks! 'twas a lucky star that guided my footsteps down this way. Now, to watch you, my precious pair!"

The conversation between Franks and Bruno appeared to be of an exciting nature, for it was freely interpolated with gestures, some of which savored of the belligerent.

Finally the two men turned and entered the corner saloon, in front of which they had been standing.

"Gone to get a wet, I suppose!" Dick mused.

"I'll wait till they come out, and then follow his baked-beans-ship, the Bum! I can find Franks whenever I want him; but, what I want first is to get onto the haunts of the bummer. A patient study of his movements, may result in my finding the object of my search much sooner than I have expected."

For full an hour Dick waited, and watched the door of the saloon, but without success, as neither of the two men came forth.

His patience by this time exhausted, the detective then crossed the street, and opening the door, looked into the saloon.

There were only half a dozen men on the inside, but Franks and Bruno were not among them.

Dick then discovered that there was a door opening into a side street; through this the birds had doubtless taken their flight.

"Well, I'm baffled, for sure!" Dick muttered, "but I mustn't expect to have everything work to my liking. I'm near Hester street, and as I have plenty of time on my hands, I reckon I'll pay a visit to that noble boulevard, and get a view of Old Mag's palatial residence. I may want to pay Margaret's domicile a visit after a while."

In due time he reached his new destination, and viewed the premises from across the street.

The number the policeman had given him was that of an old dilapidated brick tenement, located in one of the worst neighborhoods. It was four stories in height, and evidently a regular beehive, for a motley swarm of dirty children played about the door of the hallway leading to the upper floors, and there old faces and young were at many of the windows.

The occupants of the tenement were evidently a mixture of Irish, Italians and Poles, with a sprinkling of Russian Jews.

The place was an uninviting one, to say the best of it, and there was an odor of evil clinging about it.

While Dick was viewing the premises, a strapping urchin approached him and solicited a penny.

"Look here, my lad!" Dick replied. "Answer me a few questions, and I'll give you a quarter."

The boy's eyes bulged out in wonderment.

Probably he had never possessed so much money at one time in his life!

"All right!" he eagerly replied. "Wot d'yer want to know?"

"Does Old Mag live over yonder?"

"Yas."

"Whereabouts?"

"She's got der fu'st floor an' suller."

"Who lives with her?"

"No one, 'cept her man."

"What's his name?"

"Bill Bruno. Better luk out fer him. He's tough!"

"How does Old Mag get her living?"

"Oh! she *gits* it. She rents out the tenements an' then, she makes medicine out o' roots an' yarbs, an' hawks it to the neighbors."

"Have you seen anything of a pretty young lady there, lately?"

"Gosh, no! No young leddy would go in thar. The Old Fright would skeer her into fits, she's so ugly!"

Having gained all the information he was likely to in that direction, Dick passed on through Hester street up to Broadway, after giving the urchin the quarter.

On his way up Broadway, he luckily encountered Steele Standish.

"Well, what's the news?" the latter young gentleman eagerly demanded.

"Nothing much. The trail is still dark. The clouds are gradually lifting, however. Did I understand that you were willing to assist me in this case?"

"Most assuredly! I shall not enter into business with Mr. Vance for some days to come yet, and until then my time is my own. Besides, having known Violet from childhood up to the time she went to Vassar, two years ago, I naturally feel deeply concerned about her disappearance."

"Very likely. Do you know Mr. Vance's secretary, Felix Franks?"

Standish nodded.

"I know of him," was the reply. "We are not intimate acquaintances, from the fact that we have seemed to cherish a dislike for each other from our first meeting."

"Well, I want you to play detective. I want you to watch him."

"So?"

"Exactly. I want you to shadow his every movement, when he is outside of Vance's office, but you must take care you are not suspected of watching him. Do you think you can work the racket?"

"Yes. I have always had a hankering to be a detective, but my people objected. Nevertheless, I have from time to time provided myself with disguises, and have a good stock. I've an idea I can shadow your man to the queen's taste."

"Good! That will take that much work off my hands. When you have anything to report, leave a note for me at the Bartholdi Hotel. I must be going now. Good-by!"

"Good-by. Success to you!"

Then Dick hurried on up Broadway, for it was near time to look up Rats, the newsboy.

By the time he reached the vicinity of the Grill, the newsboys were abroad with bundles of evening papers under their arms, each vying with the other in seeing who could yell the loudest, and the air was resonant with the cries of *News, Telegram, Sun*, etc., and if either paper boasted of an inch of news under a glaring headline, the precocious juvenile vender was "onto it" and made it a feature to accelerate his sales.

If an inoffensive smaller "kid" meandered on to the favorite beat of his elder brother, he was immediately admonished, in no Sunday-school language, to "git," or take a thrashing, and more than one blow or kick was used to protect the forbidden ground.

Dick watched the bustling activity of these juvenile merchants for some time with amusement ere he espied the object of his search—Mr. Rats.

He then proceeded to collar the lad forthwith.

"Look here, boy," he said; "what do you ask for what papers you have got?"

"Fer all on 'em?" exclaimed Rats, in astonishment.

"Yes, for all of them—every one."

The urchin counted over his considerable bundle, meditatively.

"Dollar ten," he said, finally.

"Very well. Give them to this boy, and I'll give you your price," and the detective pointed to a weak, pale-faced little shaver, who was trying to drive a business among his elder brothers of the "perfesh."

"Ye don't mean it?" Rats ejaculated, his amazement increasing.

"To be sure I do. Go do as I bid you, immediately!"

Rats obeyed, and then returned for his money. "Here's a dollar-fifty. Never mind the change," Dick said. "Now, come with me."

"What fer?"

"You shall know, directly. Come along! I'll make it worth your while. I want to talk with you."

Wonderingly did the young street Arab follow the detective, to the office of an adjacent hotel, where both became seated.

In the eyes of Rats, Deadwood Dick, with his long hair and broad-brim sombrero, was a great man, such as the newsboy had often read about in novels, where Indians were slaughtered by the hundreds.

After Dick had lit a cigar he turned to his ragged acquaintance.

"Rats," he said, "where were you to-day?"

"Oh! 'round about town."

"You were at the residence of Roger Vance, on Lexington avenue?"

"Huh! huh!"

"You took a letter there?"

"Yep!"

"Who sent you there?"

"Dunno, boss."

"You don't know, you young rascal? Why, of course you do. None of your lying! Who sent you?"

"I tell yer I *don't* know. He didn't tell me his name, an' I never see'd him afore."

"It was a man who gave you the letter."

"Yas."

"Where were you when he gave it to you?"

"Down at Broadway and Broome street."

"How did this man look?"

"He had a big black pair o' whiskers an' black hair. Couldn't see much of his face."

"Was he dressed as a seaman?"

"Not much! Looked more like a minister. Had on a suit o' black broadcloth, and a shiny plug hat."

"Tell me about how you came to carry the message?"

"Well, I had horried Teddy O'Neill's kit, an' was shinin' the chap's shoes when he axed me would I like to make a dollar. I told him I allus made it a point to rake in all the case-notes I could get hold of. Then he wanted to know if I know'd where Roger Vance lived, and I told him no. Then, he axed me if I could find Lexington avenue, Number —. I told him I could. Then, he offered me a dollar to carry a letter to that point. I considered the distance, the cost of car-fare, an' the wear an' tear on the hosses, and hit him for a dollar 'n a half!"

"Well?"

"He forked over like a little man, and I took the letter."

"You never saw this man before?"

"Never as I knows on."

"Do you think you would recognize him if you ever saw him again?"

"Kinder reckon so, if I ever sot my eyes on to his feet."

"Why, how would you recognize him by his feet?" Dick demanded, in surprise.

"Cause they was so small. They wa'n't no bigger'n a woman's. Why, I made four cents and ninety-seven one-hundredths on *that* shine. Some men's brogans we don't clear more'n two cents on, not countin' the tax on elbow-grease an' wear on lrushes!"

Dick reflected a few moments.

"Rats," he said, "how would you like to become a great detective, and give up selling papers?"

"How would I? Why, that would just hit me right where I live. Any money in it? I'm in for anything that fetches along the franchises, sech as the Broadway boodle road, and the like!"

"Oh! there's money in it—enough sight more than you can make selling papers. I am a detective, and, as you appear to be a pretty shrewd sort of lad, I'll take you as my apprentice, if you like!"

"That's settled! Consider me a member of the force. Give me a pair of handcuffs, and I'll blamed quick put 'em on Mickey Monahan, over yonder, what steals apples off'm old Pizarro the fruit man!"

"Hold your horses, sir! If I employ you, you must do as I say, not as you think. Behave yourself, and do away with pranks, and I will make a man of you."

"All right, boss. Steer ahead, and I won't be fur behind on ketchin' on."

"Do you know where Bum Boston lives?"

"Yes; down in Hester street, at Old Mag's."

"Are they married?"

"So the folks say. Dunno, I'm sure."

"Have you ever been in Mag's place?"

"Not much! Ketch me goin' in thar. Old Mag's a reg'lar old tearer, and even the perlice is afraid of her."

"Well, be that as it may, boy, if I take you into my confidence, can you keep a close mouth on you, and not blab what you hear?"

"Closer than an oyster out o' water!" Rats assured. "I never was much fer givin' away what I know'd, to others. But, I kinder liked you for lickin' old Bum Boston!"

"Well, now. I'll tell you what I want you to do. It is my belief that Old Mag and Bruno hold a young lady a prisoner, in the Hester street den. If not there, on board some vessel in New York Harbor. Now, I want you to hunt up Bruno, and shadow his every movement, from the time he rises in the morning until he goes to bed at night. Can you do it?"

"Well, boss, if I can't no other kid in New York can. I know that loafer, and his hang-outs, like a book, and I've dogged him many's the time, when he didn't know it, to see if I couldn't get the bulge on him, for 'busin' me!"

"Very well. Now, you understand what you are to do?"

"You bet!"

"Well, to carry out my plans, you may need some money. Here are five dollars. You will be careful, and do not spend it foolishly."

"Trust me for that, boss. I ain't no fool if I am only a newsboy."

"You are no longer a newsboy, but are a detective, now, and must conduct yourself with the caution, shrewdness, and judgment of one!"

"If I don't, boss, I hope you may kick me clear from New York to Hoboken. You've give me a chance, and I'm goin' to hump myself to make the best of it, you bet."

"Bravely spoken. Now, another thing, and I want you to pay particular attention to what I say, so as to act according to directions:

"I propose to visit the Hester street den to-night, and endeavor to find out if the girl is there or not. Of course, I know not what harm may befall me—I may get into a bad scrape. However, if I come out safe and sound, I will be at this hotel at exactly four o'clock to-morrow morning, at which time you are to meet me here. Understand?"

"Correct!"

"Very good. If I am not here exactly on the hour, you will know I've got into trouble at the Hester street den and need help. You are then to hasten to Mr. Roger Vance, of Lexington avenue, and tell him all about it, and he will bring the police to my assistance. See?"

"You bet, boss! I'm on to it all. But, say, you better be careful! Old Mag's crib have got a tough reputation!"

"I've no doubt of that, but I shall be on the alert. You can go now. Do your work right, my boy, and you shall be well paid for it."

"You bet I'll do it up brown. Hello! I'm off, boss. Yonder goes Bum Boston, now! Good-by!"

And away darted Deadwood Dick's young apprentice, like a fox-hound on the scent.

While, after lighting a cigar, Dick left the hotel and betook himself by street car toward Crosby street.

"I wonder what adventures this night has in store for me!" he mused. "I must go prepared!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A CLEAN "KNOCK-OUT."

WHEN Dick arrived at the Fulton residence, he found supper ready and waiting for him, and he, Mrs. Fulton, and Felix Franks sat down to the repast.

Virgie was not present.

"Where is Virgie this evening?" Franks inquired, as he buttered his toast.

"Oh! she's gone to Philadelphia, to order her wedding trousseau," the widow hastened to explain. "She insisted that she could do much better in bargains there than here. Virgie is a good one, when it comes to driving a bargain."

"Is she acquainted in Philadelphia?" Franks inquired, with evident anxiety.

"Oh, yes. We used to live there, you know."

"Ah! yes. I believe I have heard you mention the fact before. How long does Miss Fulton propose to be absent?"

"A week, or possibly longer."

The conversation then lagged, until Franks turned abruptly to Deadwood Dick.

"I believe I saw you at Vance's to-day?" he observed.

"Yes, I allow you did."

"Doing some business with the old gent?"

"Well, not particularly as yet. We've been doing a little figuring, but as yet nothing has come of it."

"Some land scheme, I presume. Vance better keep out of it, and confine his operations to oil, where he has made all his boodle. I've no faith in these mushroom Western land speculations and city booms."

"I presume Mr. Vance is the best judge of what he wants to invest in!" Dick replied, curtly.

"I'm not so certain of that. As he grows older, Mr. Vance is susceptible to biting at bad bait, and I have several times saved him from dismal investments. Of course it is to my interest to save him from being swindled."

"Very naturally," Dick retorted, coolly, "but if your remarks are an insinuation that it is my intention to swindle your master, you go very far wide of the mark, and had better confine your opinion strictly to yourself!"

The word "master" did not appear to touch Mr. Franks in a very pleasant spot, for he flushed angrily.

"I did not say you were trying to swindle him, in so many words," he replied, "but of course you are a perfect stranger to us, and so not above suspicion. As to the 'master' part of it, no man is my master, nor ever will be, and if you presume to use the term in addressing me again, I shall take it upon myself to chastise you severely."

Dick smiled serenely, but made no reply; while Mrs. Fulton looked worried.

"I hope you won't quarrel, gentlemen," she said. "I see no occasion for it."

"Nobody's quarreling!" Franks retorted, "but, just the same, I won't allow any wild Westerner to insult me, you know!"

"You had better be more choice in your remarks, Mr. Franks!" Dick continued, "or the wild Westerner may become rabid and attack you!"

"Bah! No one is afraid of you!" Franks returned, contemptuously. "I've kicked better mongrels than you into the gutter! You think you Western cut-throats can come here and frighten decent people? Well, I guess not!"

Dick laid aside his knife and fork, and immediately arose from the table, a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"Franks!" he said, "you are a blackguard and a coward to utter those words, and you know it, and I demand that you retract them, or I shall punish you for your insolence. I'm no cut-throat, nor will I allow any man to call me such. Call back the insult, or it will be the worse for you!"

Franks also arose to his feet, with an air of importance.

"I retract nothing!" he said. "I am not afraid of you, nor do I fear the consequences of calling you a low-bred ruffian. For what I know, you may be some c-caped jail-bird!"

Just time had he to utter this, but no more, for the iron fist caught him an unexpected blow on the jaw, under the left ear, and stretched him senseless upon the floor.

It was a clean knock-out, and no professional pugilist could have done better.

Seeing that Franks was too stunned to attempt to rise, Deadwood Dick then turned to Mrs. Fulton, who was anxiously wringing her hands, and apparently very much frightened.

"Madam," the detective said, "I am very sorry I have been forced to make a scene in your house, but the provocation was too great to resist. I am naturally cool-headed, and have pretty good judgment in trying times, but, knowing this man Franks to be a consummate villain, I found it impossible to tolerate deliberate insult from him."

"Within a few days I shall be in position to prove to you that he is not only a scoundrel of the first water, but has also grossly wronged you!"

"Wronged me, sir?"

"Exactly. I cannot fully explain, now, but will do so, later on. I will tell you, however, that my object in taking board here was for the purpose of getting at the truth of a grave suspicion. When I tell you that Franks and your daughter are connected in an unparalleled swindling scheme, I've no doubt you will be amazed, angry, incredulous. I don't blame you if you are. But, as sure as my name is Bristol, you are being completely hoodwinked. You are being led to understand that your daughter and Franks are to marry, and take a protracted foreign tour. The fact is, they are going to do nothing of the kind. They may wed, but the foreign trip will not be taken, and has not been seriously contem-

plated. This has been proven to me by overhearing a conversation between them, when you had retired for the night.

"Now, Mrs. Fulton, you need not believe this, if you don't want to, but I shall shortly prove every word of it true. I shall also prove that your daughter has not gone to Philadelphia, at all, but is still in New York, and you will not see her again, until I unmask this glaring fraud."

"In substantiation of what I have told you, I need only to add that I am a United States detective, and know whereof I speak. I have been the participant in an unfortunate row in your house, and, as a gentleman, shall feel it my duty to seek other accommodations—at least, so long as Franks remains here, which I dare say will not be long, as within a week's time the State will furnish him board and room."

"In the meantime, I have but one thing to ask of you, and that is this:

"Keep what I have told you strictly to yourself, for if you do, I may be able to save your daughter from public disgrace, which otherwise, I cannot do!"

Mrs. Fulton, deathly pale, had sunk back upon a chair.

"For God's sake, what do you mean?" she gasped. "Explain! tell me all, I beg of you!"

"Impossible, at present," Dick declared. "I have told you all I can, to-night. You will know more, ere long, however. By all means, if you wish to save your daughter, mention not a word of what I have told you, to any one. Do not give Franks the slightest intimation that I am a detective. By doing this, I am pretty sure I can avert disgrace. As evidence, however, corroborative of what I have told you, I think I can in a measure satisfy any doubts that may exist in your mind. I presume you know where your daughter would stop, in case she did go to Philadelphia?"

"Oh! yes. My late husband's brother's family lives there, on Fairmount avenue, near Sixteenth street, and it was Virgie's intention to stop there with her cousin. She told me so, before her departure."

"Exactly. Did she take any amount of baggage with her?"

"Only a sachel, containing her jewelry, and a few personal effects."

"Well, to-morrow, you can telegraph to the place you have mentioned, and you will find that your daughter has not been there."

"Very well, sir, I will do so; and furthermore, I will keep a close tongue in my head, until I hear from you again. Of course what you have told me has shocked me beyond expression, but, you have spoken in such a straightforward manner that I am not so incredulous as you may suppose. In fact, I have noticed that there was something rather peculiar in Virgie's actions, of late, but attributed it to the influences of thought over her approaching marriage. God forbid that she should ever disgrace me, who has ever watched over her so devotedly!"

"I will, as far as possible, try to avert such disgrace, Mrs. Fulton," Dick said earnestly. "As for Franks, make it a point to treat him as usual, so that his suspicions may not be aroused. I see he is beginning to show signs of returning consciousness now, so I will go. As soon as I have anything of importance to report, you will hear from me."

"Very well; I shall await in anxiety, hoping all may not be as bad as you suspect."

Dick then bade her good-night, and took his departure. He had left his baggage at the Bartholdi, presuming he would not remain long at the boarding-house; so back to the Bartholdi he went, and was lucky enough to secure his former room, to which he had his baggage removed.

Here he made a few changes in his toilet, and then set forth en route for Old Mag's den on Hester street.

He had taken care to properly arm himself, and saw no reason why he might not carry out his venture without particular peril.

At least, his spirit did not quail when he entered the unsavory neighborhood and rapped at the door of the Frights' domicile, where police and roundsmen were chary about intruding.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRIGHT.

It was still quite early in the evening, but Dick was by no means sure that he would find the old beldam up.

He did, however, for his rap upon the door was answered after a few seconds. The door was partly opened, and the head and shoulders of a woman appeared in the aperture.

The neighbors, in christening her the Fright,

had not gone wide of the mark, for, in face, she was positively the ugliest-looking creature Dick had ever set eyes upon.

Her features were sharp, wrinkled, and of a yellowish complexion; her glaring eyes were not unlike balls of fire; her nose was hooked, and her large mouth exposed to view two rows of snaggy teeth. Her upper lip wore an incipient mustache that many a gallant young swain would have been proud to possess, while the disheveled, matted mass of hair upon her head was of an iron-gray color.

She was tall and gaunt of figure, and slouchily attired, and walked with the aid of a heavy cane.

She glared at Dick angrily as she thrust her head through the aperture of the partly-opened door.

"What d'ye want?" she demanded angrily.

"Why do you pound on my door?"

"My dear madam," replied Deadwood Dick, "I come to you in the interest of medicine. I have learned that you manufacture some excellent remedies from roots and herbs, and I wish to strike a bargain with you for some of the same. My name is Doctor Redpath, and I am the White Medicine Chief of the Crow Indians."

Old Mag surveyed him a minute doubtfully, and then opened the door wider.

"Come in!" she said, and Dick obeyed the order, only to find himself in a dark and narrow hall.

The old hag then closed and locked the door, after which she brushed past Deadwood Dick.

"Follow me!" she ordered.

They groped their way along through the hall and then entered a room of large size, it taking up all of the first floor, except what had been set apart for the hallway.

This room was lit by a large lantern that evidently had once been the headlight of a locomotive. By its light Dick was able to make out that the room was fairly-well furnished, containing, among other things, a bed, bureau, dresser, wardrobe, table and cook-stove, and a fine Wilton carpet! The walls of the apartment, however, presented a strange contrast to the furnishings, being covered with bunches of roots and herbs of various kinds suspended from nails and hooks. These were strung up in great profusion all around the room, and gave forth a pungent odor that was not at all pleasant.

"You can take a seat there!" Old Mag said, pointing to a chair, "and make known your business. What ails you? What do you want to get cured of?"

"Personally I have nothing to be cured of!" Dick replied. "As I told you, I was formerly a medicine man among the Indians. Of late, however, I have been faking."

"Faking?"

"Yes—that is, traveling from town to town and selling medicine on the street, you see. Oh! there's big money in it if one only has the right article. Folks are getting kind of chary of us fakirs, and it is getting so one must needs have an article of merit to command ready sale."

"I heard of you, and that you made herb medicines, and so I thought I would come and see if we couldn't strike a bargain. I really have no time to manufacture medicines myself, and want to get some one to manufacture and bottle them for me. Now, you have a great many medicinal plants, roots and herbs in stock, I see; why can't you and I strike a dicker? I will pay you a fair price per bottle, and take the stuff as fast as you can manufacture it."

The old crone's eyes gleamed greedily.

"You pay cash for the medicine?" she interrogated.

"Of course," Dick replied. "You get me up a good selling thing, and I'll make you rich in a few months. I've sold as high as two hundred bottles of an evening, for which I've paid fifty cents per bottle. Of course the gross cost of manufacturing and putting up the medicine did not exceed ten dollars, leaving for the manufacturer a clean profit of ninety dollars!"

The greedy gleam in Old Mag's eyes seemed to intensify.

"I will make up medicine for you for fifty cents a bottle, if you will take a hundred or more bottles a day," she agreed, eagerly. "Old Mag has a great reputation as a chemist and a doctress, and her medicines always cure."

"So I have heard, else I should not have sought you out. I shall be glad to deal with you, as I am going to work the outlying suburbs of New York, and your place of business will be handy. How soon can you have me a hundred bottles ready?"

"That depends on what kind of stuff you want. What diseases do you want to cure?"

"A good blood medicine sells best. If I

guarantee it to cure a thousand and one ailments, of course that's my own business."

The old hag chuckled.

"I see! I see!" she said. "You understand your business, my friend, you understand your business, and we will make money. I have one sample bottle of a very fine blood medicine left, which I will show you. You wait here and I will get it for you."

Dick signified assent. Then the woman arose, and drew aside a large Brussels rug in the center of the room, revealing a trap-door in the bared floor. Lighting a hand-lamp, she disappeared down through the opening, which was seen on lifting the trap.

Stealthily leaving the chair he had occupied, Dick crept to the opening, and obtained a good view of the place below.

It was a small cellar, principally notable for the boxes, barrels and other rubbish it contained.

A shelf ran along the rough, shabby wall, and contained an array of bottles of various sizes, and the old beldam was rummaging among these.

One good look was all Dick wanted, and he then returned to his seat.

"That settles one thing," he muttered. "Violence Vance is not held a prisoner here, unless she is confined on some of the upper floors, and that is not probable, as they are occupied by other tenants. I shall have to look elsewhere. When I see Rats, perhaps he may have some information for me that will put me on a new trail."

He was barely seated when Old Mag returned from the cellar, closed down the trap, and rearranged the rug. Then, she handed Dick a half-pint bottle, containing a dark-colored liquid.

"This is the stuff," she said, "and is composed of six different properties. I warrant it to be the best blood-purifier in existence, and as blood is life, you can safely warrant it to cure many ailments."

Dick tasted of the decoction, and found it to be very bitter.

"Very well," he said. "Have as many bottles as you can prepare, in readiness to-morrow afternoon, when I will take them and pay you the cash. I must be going, now, as I have some other business matters to attend to, yet, to-night!"

As he arose to depart, there came a violent knocking on the outside hall door.

Old Mag instantly turned pale with apprehension.

"Good heaven! It's my husband, Bill! You must not be seen here, or he will kill me! Quick! I will hide you, until he goes away. He will not remain long!"

She seized Dick by the arm, and half-dragged him toward the tall wardrobe, into which she shoved him, and closed and locked the door.

She then went and admitted Bill Bruno, and in his close place of confinement, Dick soon heard the pair enter the room he had just vacated.

The bully was swearing in round terms, and it was evident he was in no pleasant frame of mind. Eagerly did Dick listen to catch the conversation he had no doubt would follow.

CHAPTER X.

UNDERNEATH A GREAT CITY.

THE wardrobe into which Dick had been so unceremoniously thrust was pretty near, if not quite, air tight, and the prisoner then found that he would not be able to stand it long, without a fresh supply of oxygen. Thus it was that he could but naturally hope that Bill Bruno would make his visit to Old Mag extremely short.

"Why, William, what puts you in such an ugly mood, to-night?" Dick heard the beldam anxiously ask. "I guess you've been drinking more than is good for you?"

"No I haven't, either. Where's that feller that come in here, awhile ago?"

"What feller, William?"

"Oh! ye needn't play innocent on me!" yelled Bruno. "You can't shet my eye, you old wench. A long-haired galoot was seen to come in here awhile ago, an' you know it!"

"Oh! that was a quack doctor, that sells medicine on the street. He came to buy herbs of me!" Mag hastened to explain.

"Doctor be hanged!" Bruno roared. "He was no more of a doctor than I am. He was an infernal detective, sent here to spy upon us. Where is he, now? You've got him hid, somewhere!"

"Nonsense. He left ten minutes before you came. I don't b'lieve no such thing that he's a detective. I'm a good reader of character, and

I know he's a street fakir, who swindles the people out o' their shekels, by sellin' 'em a lot o' trumped-up medicine. He's ordered a hundred bottles o' stuff from me, and is to come for it to-morrow night!"

Bruno uttered another oath.

"If he does, I'll bet I'm here, when he comes. What high-soundin' title did he give you, Mag, you old fool!"

"Be a little more choice in your remarks, Bill Bruno!" Mag cried, fiercely. "I'm not afraid of your bluster, and you know it. The man gave his name as Doctor Redpath."

Bruno burst into an uproarious guffaw.

"Redpath in my eye!" he declared. "The fellow's name is Bristol, and he is a detective, and has got us under surveillance. If we don't land in jail before many hours, we may consider ourselves mighty lucky. Felix gave me a tip, not half an hour ago, to be on my guard. I, for one, shall keep away from this den for awhile."

"Oh, you will, hey, and leave me to face the music?" the virago cried, angrily. "Very well, Bill Bruno, you can go and never come back, for all I care. But mind you this: If trouble comes to me, I will be the death-blow to your plans, and don't you forget it!"

"Bah! I don't fret over what you can do. If you try any monkey business, we'll not be long in finding a way of disposing of you, rest assured of that. The reason I shall keep away from here for awhile is because this accursed detective is looking more for me than you. If you stand loyal to us, you will get your pay; if you don't, you are likely to get something less satisfactory!"

Old Mag's eyes glittered wickedly.

"I'll fix him when he comes again!" she declared. "If he is really a detective, he's come nosing around the wrong root!"

"Well, you can depend on it he's a detective. Felix has sized him up to the queen's taste, and if we catch him we'll make an example of him, same as we did of Wilson the hotel clerk."

"I'll do my share if he comes back here," Mag hissed. "How are matters working so far?"

"Very good, Felix says. The corn is all ready for popping right away."

"Good! but how about the money?"

"I tackled Felix to-day, but he hadn't any, to speak of."

"D'ye think he will try to play us false?"

"Pshaw! no. He dare not. It would be a dear job for him to try that. Oh! no; I guess he intends to deal on the square with us. If he didn't, he'd be less confidential."

"What do you think to-night's result will be?"

"I don't know. I have my doubts about winning. I allow the game is most too big. However, time will prove. I must be going now. Don't neglect to bag that detective, if he comes nosing around here again!"

"Oh! you bet I'll fix him!" was the emphatic reply.

Then Deadwood Dick heard them leave the room, and presently the slam of a door announced Bill Bruno's departure.

Directly afterward the old Jezebel returned to her room, whereupon Dick rapped upon the door of the wardrobe.

"Let me out!" cried he. "I am nearly smothered!"

The answer was a mocking laugh, followed by:

"Oh, ye want to get out, do you, my fine detective? Well, I guess not! You thought you'd play a cunning game on Old Mag, did ye? But you didn't quite make the thing work. You didn't know the old gal you was playin' with. You ain't the first detective that's fallen into my spider's web. So say your prayers, for I'm going to send you the way the rest went!"

The next instant Deadwood uttered a startled cry, for he felt the bottom of the wardrobe drop from beneath his feet, and down, down, down he went in a mephitic air that took away his breath, and then his senses, after which all became a blank.

"Soon, however, consciousness returned. He found himself in impenetrable darkness, and lying on the soft, muddy earth.

Arising to a sitting posture, he proceeded to feel himself over, to see if he had broken any bones.

An investigation satisfied him that he was all right so far as the bones were concerned, but his flesh was bruised and sore in many places.

Where was he? To what subterranean region had he been precipitated?

With an effort he gained his feet, and steadied himself; then, remembering that he had matches with him, he soon had a light which dimly revealed his surroundings.

He found that he was in a deep pit, or what had once, no doubt, been a well or water reservoir. The place was square in build, and ran up from the dank bottom, to a height of over twenty feet, where it met the floor through which the detective had fallen.

To scale the slimy walls was an utter impossibility, as a coating of cement covered the masonry.

There was mud on the bottom of the cistern to the depth of an inch, and at one side of the place lay the fleshless skeleton of a man. Very probably rats had eaten away the flesh.

At one side of the wall there was a break no bigger than a cigar-box, where a couple of bricks had fallen out.

Beyond was blank darkness.

But yet, in the desperation resulting from his disagreeable situation, the sight of this hole in the wall gave the young detective hope.

It had already cost him four matches to make these discoveries, and it now occurred to him that it would be advisable for him to find out just how many matches he possessed.

He carried them in a metal pocket-safe, and a count of them resulted in a credit of a hundred and ten matches.

Lighting one of the matches, he ignited a newspaper, which he chanced to have in his pocket, and thrust this through the aperture in the wall, then peered through into the space beyond.

Heavens! what was this he saw?

He was within a few feet of a large sewer or tunnel.

It was from this the dreadful stench came.

But, what of that?

This sewer was so large that a man could nearly stand erect in it, and a flood of water was rapidly hurrying the refuse toward the sea.

By walking straddle-legged, a person could pick his way through the sewer, without particularly contaminating himself with the filth.

But here another question arose.

Where would the sewer lead him to, and would not the nauseous gases overcome him ere he could reach an outlet?

His mind now fully made up, he at once began enlarging the aperture in the wall.

It did not prove to be a very hard job. The bricks were loose, and it occurred to the detective that some one had removed and replaced them at some previous period.

Had that person succeeded in making his escape? That was a question surrounded by gravest doubt, but Dick's hope for the best did not waver.

With eager hands he tore away the bricks, and soon had the aperture sufficiently enlarged to admit him to the sewer.

Then he stepped into the sewer, and proceeded on his journey in a half-crouching position.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS—RATS'S STORY.

WORDS are inadequate to express the peculiar sensation that affected the detective as he groped his way, straddle-legged, along through the Stygian gloom.

He soon became, in a measure, accustomed to the sickening stench, so that he did not mind it so much, but the thought that he was underneath the great metropolis, unknown to any one, and striving to hunt his way to the outer world, was not one calculated to inspire a person of even Dick's courageous spirit with enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, he went struggling bravely on, wondering if he ever would escape from this living tomb.

He was very sparing about lighting matches, and only once in a considerable while would ignite one, in order to investigate his surroundings.

Every few minutes he would come to a smaller transverse sewer, which emptied into the one he was following, but in no instance did he find a larger one, until it seemed to him he had traveled at least a mile.

The way he was forced to walk was very tiresome, and he was compelled to pause for rest every now and then.

After what seemed to him many hours, his nostrils scented a refreshing current of air!

Eagerly he pushed forward, the way gradually grew lighter, until, finally, he saw a tiny speck of daylight far in front of him.

Ah! how welcome was the sight—so welcome, in fact, that he felt like shouting with joy.

Increasing his speed, he rapidly brought the light nearer to him. As he did so, he saw that the light did not come from the terminus of the sewer. Instead, it came from overhead.

In five minutes, he stood beneath a man-hole of the sewer, and looked up into the outer world. What did he see?

The blue sky, far above, and a couple of men busily engaged in repairing the masonry about the mouth of the man-hole.

For a moment Dick was too overjoyed for speech, over the prospect of rescue; but, quickly recovering himself, he raised his voice, and yelled:

"Halloa! up there!"

Coming as it did, literally from the bowels of the earth, the shout sounded weird and sepulchral, and the two Hibernians above were naturally startled, and really excusable if they were frightened.

They gave one terrified glance down into the gloomy tunnel, and then, the way they scrambled out of sight was a caution!

The next minute the heavy iron lid was clapped over the mouth of the man-hole, and the tenant of the sewer below, was left in utter darkness.

Poor Dick!

His heart sunk within him, and he was forced, through faintness, to lean against the side of the sewer for support.

But, directly his indomitable will power asserted itself, and then he made the tunnel ring with his stentorian yells.

Nor did he stop yelling, until he once more saw the light above, the man-hole covering having been removed by a burly policeman, whose head appeared in view—a sight most welcome to the eager eyes of Deadwood Dick.

"Hello! What the devil is the matter down there?" the officer cried.

"Help! help!" Dick shouted back. "I am a prisoner in the sewer. For God's sake throw me down a rope, and help me out!"

"All right. Wait a bit!"

Directly, one end of a rope was lowered into the sewer, and, seizing firm hold of it, Dick was drawn upward, and soon found himself on terra firma, and in the light of the outer world!

A crowd had already collected, and they surveyed Dick, who was pretty well daubed with sewer slime both with curiosity and amusement.

"Well, sir!" the policeman said, eying Dick disapprovingly, "how happens it you came down in the sewer?"

"Until I get washed up, and a change of clothing, I cannot tell you fully," Dick replied. "I will, however, inform you that I am a U. S. detective, and was cast into a pit, or cistern, by my enemies, and there left to perish. Fortunately, I escaped into the sewer from which I have just been rescued, and after hours' toiling, reached this point. Is there a clothing store near at hand, and also a bath-house?"

"Yes. Come with me. Yonder is a clothing store, and my house is just around the corner, where you can clean up."

Dick heartily thanked the officer, who, after dispersing the crowd led the way.

After procuring a full outfit of attire at the store in question, Dick went to the house of the policeman, and there proceeded to put himself in presentable condition.

This he was not long in doing, thanks to the assistance of the officer, and Richard was himself again.

During the "cleaning up" process, at the officer's solicitation, Dick gave a brief outline of his adventure at Old Mag's, without touching upon the real object of his visit there, merely intimating that the old beldam and Bruno were suspected of complicity in a certain crime, and he, Dick, had been detailed to ferret the matter out.

The officer "cottoned" to the story at once, and said:

"Well, you can consider yourself in luck, sir, for you have had a mighty narrow escape. As for this woman, Old Mag, the police have had their eyes on her for years, but she is a cunning old hen, and no charge has ever been actually found against her sufficient to warrant her arrest. What do you propose to do?—swear out a warrant against her, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, no—at least not just at present. Before I pull the old wretch, I want to also nab her copartner, Bill Bruno, and pull the pair together. I am confident of being able to place a serious charge against both of them, and until then, I prefer they should think me at the bottom of the old well. Understand?"

"I do."

"Does your beat take in any part of the precinct where Old Mag resides?"

"Well, no. But I expect to be transferred to-morrow so that my beat will take in that particular part of Hester street."

"Very well," Deadwood Dick replied. "Can I trust you to keep this matter quiet regarding my escape from the sewer?"

"I will be as close as possible. But, in this year of our age, it is almost impossible, dogged as we are by an army of reporters, to entirely suppress all the facts of a case. However, I rather like your grit, and I will do what I can for you."

"Thank you. Here is a V, as recompense for what trouble I have put you to, and in a few days I hope to be able to hand you a warrant for the arrest of both Old Mag and Bill Bruno."

"All right. I shall be glad to snake in the latter cuss, for he's given the force a lot of trouble in days gone by. Let him once get before Judge Duffy, at Jefferson Market, and he goes up for a term that will make his teeth chatter!"

After a little further conversation, Deadwood Dick bade the officer good-by, and took his departure.

His first action was to hasten to the Bartholdi Hotel, where he had previously held the interview with his young apprentice, Rats.

Inquiry revealed that Rats had not been seen about the place early that morning, and while Dick was anxious as to what had become of the boy, he was rather glad that he had not put in an appearance.

Leaving the hotel, he mechanically turned his footsteps toward Broadway, his brain busied in deep thought.

He had not gone far when he unexpectedly came across Rats.

"Hi! hello, boss!" the urchin saluted. "D'ye git tired of waitin' for me?"

"No, for I have only just been to the hotel myself. Have you any news, Rats?"

"Well, yes, some, but not a cart-load," the urchin replied. "You remember when I left you?"

"Sure!"

"Well, I follered Bum Boston like a hungry calf follers a pail of buttermilk, and he led me a good long chase. He visited a lot of jints where he sometimes hangs out, but stayed only a few minutes in each place. Finally, after dark a party considerable while, he met a dudish-dressed chap on Broadway, and they held a confab, but I couldn't get near enough to hear what they were talking about."

"After awhile they separated, and Bum Boston went ter Old Mag's house in Hester street. He did not stay there long, but went up-town, and again met the dude at 28th street and Eighth avenue."

"Ah! Go on!" Dick exclaimed, eagerly.

"Well, they held another confab there, an' I heard the words, 'down to the pier,' and then both started toward the North River. I made a mighty quick circuit of a block, and got ahead of 'em a good bit, and when I reached the wharf I hid myself on top of a high pile of baled hay, which had been unloaded from a schooner near at hand."

"Purty soon the two chappies came along, and then they began a search of the'r s'roundin's ter see if any spies was in the vicinity. Both on 'em was now masked and muffled up in high-collared rubber coats."

"After they had searched a while, I reckon they concluded there wasn't any spies around; then the big bugger, which of course was Bum Boston, suddenly disappeared, but I could not tell where to, it was so dark."

"Pother feller kept pacin' to and fro on ther wharf, and as I had lost Boston's trail, I made up my mind to learn what his pal was up to."

"Quite right," Dick assented. "I perceive that you have already developed good detective qualities, and I shall not be surprised if you have a brilliant future. But, go on!"

"Well, ther feller continued his walkin' till I reckon it was about midnight, when a close cab was driven hot foot up to the wharf and stopped. The driver was in livery, and remained on his seat, but a man, carrying a lantern, got out of the cab and approached ther bloke on ther wharf."

"Well, you kin bet about this time my hull anatomy was transformed inter ears!"

"Are you the person who calls himself Captain Marlinspike? the man from the cab now asked."

"I am," was the reply. "Who are you?"

"I am Roger Vance, whose daughter you hold in captivity, sir," was the answer. "I have come to redeem her. Where is she?"

"On board my ship, some miles from here. I'd be a fool to bring her ashore until I get my price for her. If you propose to come to my

terms, all you've got to do is fork over the cash, and your daughter shall be placed on shore, bag and baggage, by early daybreak."

"At what point?"

"I don't choose to say," the capt'in said.

"Well, ter make a long story short, ther capt'in an' Mr. Vance held a hot confab that lasted for several minutes. Vance argued he wouldn't give up a cent till his daughter was handed over to him personally, while the capt'in swore by all the spars and spankers on the ships in New York Harbor thet ten thousan' dollars must be forthcoming first, before the gal would be landed!"

"Then Vance tried to pull a pop; but the pirut was too quick fer him, and got the drop on him first. If I had had a gun, I should have taken a hand in the game immedjetly, but I didn't have one."

"The capt'in then tuk out his watch, an' told Vance he'd give him just five minnits to come to time. If he didn't produce, he'd never see his gal."

"After sum deliberation, the old gent forked over the spondulics, an' received the promise that his daughter should be landed in New York by daybreak. Then Vance jumped into his cab and was driven away, while Marlinspike was almost immedjetly jined by Bum Boston, an' they had a big laugh together."

"We worked the old sucker nice!" the capt'in said, "We've got his money, but he ain't got his gal yet, by a long shot."

"Nor he ain't liable to get her," Bum replied.

"The ship sails day after to-morrow, and Violet Vance will presently find herself at the furthest corner of the world, and sold into captivity."

"The ship must not sail so soon," the capt'in said, "not until we've made another stake out of Vance. We'll work him for fifty thousand, next rip, an' he'll give it, too!"

"Then, boss, both men jumped into a row-boat what lay alongside the wharf, and quick pulled out into the stream. I tried to find another boat to foller 'em in, but couldn't, and so had to give up the chase. I doubt ef I could have follered 'em, anyhow, fer the fog on the river was so thick ye could cut it with a knife!"

CHAPTER XII.

FEELING FAST TOWARD A FOCUS.

DEADWOOD DICK had listened to the recital of his young apprentice with a clouded brow.

"The infernal idiot!" he muttered. "So he disregarded my wishes, eh, and went and gave up his cool ten thousand dollars—for nothing? Of course these villains have no intention of giving up the girl while a cent can be made by keeping her, and from your story I judge they don't propose that she shall ever be returned to her father at all."

"Old Vance has made a consummate ass of himself, and henceforth I shall work upon the case on my own hook, independent of him. You have done your work well, Rats, and I'm glad I took you on. But there's work before us yet, and don't you forget that. Come! we will take a walk and get some grub."

They sauntered leisurely down Broadway, and as they went, Dick related his singular experience since last he had met his young aide at the Bartholdi.

This narration caused Rats's eyes to bulge out in genuine astonishment.

"Jeminy! but you had a close call," he declared. "If it hadn't been fer that man-hole, I reckon you'd have had a nasty grave."

"Very likely," Dick replied. "And now, Rats, I've more work for you. I want you to haunt the immediate vicinity of the Twenty-eighth street wharf, until you get a chance to follow Bruno again."

"Reckon you're off there, boss!" Rats observed.

"So? How do you mean?"

"Simple enough. Ef these girl piruts don't intend to return the girl to her dad, they won't be apt to tackle the Twenty-eighth street route ag'in, fer fear old Vance will set a watch on 'em."

"True enough! You're a trump, Rats, I had not thought of that!" Dick said, grasping his apprentice by the hand. "Nevertheless, we must find out where Bruno goes, when he takes his boat rides. That he goes to some vessel in the harbor is now beyond doubt. That vessel must be spotted, as soon as possible. You say you know most of Bruno's New York haunts?"

"You bet I do."

"Very well. I will leave it for you to pick up his trail again, and if you succeed in striking it, take care and don't lose it. Here are ten dollars more, to defray any expenses incurred."

"All right, boss; I'll do the best I can, and I've a sweet-scented idea I can place the chump to-night. He's a great Jay for playin' policy, an' there's a shop in the rear of a cigar store on Sixth avenue, above 27th street, where he plays the most. I'll spot that, first."

"All right. Well, get some grub, now! But hold! First, you must have some better clothing. Come with me!"

They visited a shoe store, then a gents' furnishing store, and lastly, a clothing emporium, and within an hour, Rats was so changed in appearance that his former associates would not have known him.

The boy, by this time, was fairly bubbling over with enthusiasm.

They had now reached Fourteenth street, and at the Dairy Kitchen procured a repast, such as Rats had never before enjoyed, and it is unnecessary to add that both did full justice to it.

After breakfast—for it was yet early in the forenoon—Dick bade his apprentice start forth on a skirmishing tour, while he betook himself leisurely down-town.

His mind was busied in thought, and the frown upon his forehead betokened that he was not in the best of humor.

"Confound the luck!" he growled. "Why couldn't Vance have staid at home, and minded his own business? He has not only knocked my plans out, but has made a blamed fool of himself. More's the pity he didn't lose more than he did!"

The old saying that the devil's always around when one's talking about him, had an exemplification, in this instance.

Dick had walked but a little ways further, when, feeling a tap upon his shoulder, he wheeled around, to find himself face to face with Roger Vance.

"My dear Bristol," the broker said, extending his hand, "I am glad to see you!"

"I am sorry to say I can hardly return the compliment!" Dick replied, coldly, not offering to shake hands.

"Indeed?" and Mr. Vance flushed with surprise. "Why, what is the matter, sir? Why this singular change in you, may I ask?"

"I hardly think you have need to ask!" Dick retorted. "You broke your promise to me, and when a man ain't as good as his word, barring unavoidable accidents, I would rather not deal with him, any further!"

"Ah! I see. You refer to what I did, last night. Now, look here, my dear Bristol, you must not feel offended about that. I thought the matter carefully over, and despite the fact that I had promised to let you have your way, a father's instinct told me that it was my duty to redeem my daughter from those wretches, even if it did cost me a small fortune!"

"You redeemed her, I suppose—that is, she was returned to you?" Dick said, sarcastically.

"She was. She is now at my home on Lexington avenue, and I am the happiest man in Gotham. I don't begrudge a farthing I paid to secure her liberty."

Deadwood Dick's face had grown stern and dogged in its expression.

"Mr. Vance," he said, slowly and deliberately, "I don't believe your daughter has returned to you!"

Vance flushed angrily.

"What's that, sir?" he cried. "Do you dare to challenge my veracity?"

"By no means, sir. I believe—am well satisfied, in fact—that you are being made the victim of one of the most diabolical plots on record. The young woman who came to you is *not* your daughter, as I will prove to you within a week's time!"

"Bosh! utter nonsense! Don't you suppose I know my own child, sir? Why, I gave you credit for more common sense than this!"

"It is common sense I am giving you. Now, I introduced myself to you as a detective, and as a detective I have worked for you. Even last night I came near losing my life in endeavoring to work up your case."

"Now listen. Last night two men went to Twenty-eighth street wharf, North River, before your arrival. One of these men was Bill Bruno, *alias* Bum Boston. The other was the shark to whom you paid your money. I know who he is, but propose to hold back his name until I am ready to expose this really clever conspiracy."

"When these two worthies reached the wharf Bum Boston secreted himself."

"How do you know this? Were you there?"

"That matters not. I know whereof I speak. There was a spy there who was witness to the protracted conversation between you and Marlinpike. You attempted to draw a gun, but

the captain was too quick for you, and got the drop first. Am I not correct?"

"You are," Vance said, the look of surprise deepening in his face.

"Very good. Well, after you had paid over your boodle and departed, Bum Boston rejoined his comrade, and they had a good laugh at your expense. Said the captain: 'We worked the old sucker nice. We've got his money, but he hain't got his gal yet, by a long shot.' 'Nor he ain't liable to get her,' Bum replied. 'The ship sails day after to-morrow, and Violet Vance will presently find herself at the furthest corner of the world, and sold into captivity.' 'The ship must not sail so soon—not until we've made another stake out of Vance. We'll work him for fifty thousand dollars next rip, and he'll pay it, too.'"

"Those are the words they used," pursued Deadwood Dick, "and then they got into a boat, and rowed out into the river. Now, Mr. Vance, you will see that it is clearly proven that the rascals have no intention of surrendering your daughter. Their object is, as I believe, to take her off to some foreign country and sell her into endless captivity, at the same time substituting *another* woman in her place as your daughter and future heiress."

The broker looked nonplused, astounded.

"Oh, this is all utter madness," he cried. "Do you for a moment suppose I'd not know my own daughter, sir? Why, she was home every three months during the time she was at Vassar."

"Yet you told me, very recently, that it was a difficult matter to distinguish your daughter from Virgie Fulton, sir!"

The broker started.

"Good God!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean to say that you believe the young woman at my house, to be Virgie Fulton?"

"That's just what I *do* believe," Dick replied. "Virgie has left her home, telling her mother that she was going to Philadelphia, to order her wedding *trousseau*, but, by conversation I overheard between her and her lover, whose name I will not give, I have learned that the young lady had not the slightest intention of going to Philadelphia, but that, on the contrary, her lover and herself were engaged in concocting some scheme by which they expected to profit, all this being without the knowledge of Virgie's unsuspecting mother."

"I informed Mrs. Fulton, and she promised to telegraph to Philadelphia to learn if her daughter had arrived there. Of the result of the telegram, I have not yet learned, but I am well satisfied that Virgie Fulton is installed in your home, in your daughter's stead, and that your daughter is still a captive on board a ship, in New York Harbor."

"Now, Mr. Vance, all this may seem incredible and even preposterous to you. So I will not ask you to believe it until I can clearly prove it to you, and expose a most glaring piece of villainy. I will not further consider myself in your employ, but shall go on with the case, just the same as if it was one of individual interest to me. There is, however, one favor I would like to ask of you?"

"You have but to name it, sir!" replied Mr. Vance, who had grown pale and nervous. "I will never again doubt your superior sagacity. If this should turn out as you have depicted, you will never need to do another day's work. I will make you independent for life!"

"I am not working to that end!" Dick replied, briefly. "What I want to ask of you is that you will not betray to *any* one, what I have told you, nor let out a word that can possibly cause a suspicion that you are doubtful of the girl's identity."

"You have my word of honor as a gentleman that it shall be as you wish, sir!" the broker said, extending his hand, which the detective shook heartily.

"I am glad to hear it," Dick said. "Keep your word this time, and within a few days, at the most, I will conclusively prove to you that I have not been leading you over a false trail. Treat this *pseudo* Violet Vance the same as though she was your own daughter, and leave the rest to me!"

"I will do so, my boy—I will do so! You have more power over me than ever man had before, and while I am prone to believe that the girl at my house is an impostor, I am inclined to give you a generous amount of time to prove that such is the case!"

"Thank you. That is all I require."

"Perhaps," added the broker, "it might be a good idea for you to visit my house, and receive an introduction to my daughter. It might be the means of dissuading you from your theory!"

"I shall call, but not now—not before to-mor-

row. Let the young woman get fairly settled at her new home before we rush things, as, in the mean time, I wish to rescue your real daughter, and have everything in readiness for a grand climax!"

"Very well! Make it to-morrow, at ten o'clock. I want to be present and use my eyes. All this alleged conspiracy is a great mystery to me. I cannot see how it all can be. Indeed, I cannot. Why, she even brought her trunk with her—the very one I bought her before she went to Vassar."

"Oh! I presume so. If Violet was kidnapped, as we have no longer reason to doubt, it would not have been a hard matter to kidnap her trunk, also. By the way, what was the young lady's explanation of her liberation from captivity?"

"She stated that she was taken from the ship in a small boat, and after a long row up the river, was landed, with her trunk, on the Jersey side, at Hoboken. From there she took the Christopher Street Ferry to New York, and thence, a cab to my residence."

"Did she not know the name of the ship on board which she had been held a prisoner?"

"She did not."

"What had she to say in regard to her capture?"

"She says that on her arrival in New York, on December 6th, she was met at the depot by a plainly-dressed man who claimed to be my lawyer, and who claimed that I had met with a painful accident, and he had been sent to meet her—a very plausible story, as you really must admit. Not long after the cab had left the depot the man sprung upon her, and forcing the contents of a small bottle down her throat, stifled her screams with a blanket. The drug administered produced immediate insensibility. Then she knew no more until she found herself a prisoner in the hold of the vessel."

"One more question, Mr. Vance, and then I must be going. Your daughter had a valuable sealskin ulster, did she not?"

"She did, and a very fine one, too. It cost me upward of five hundred dollars."

"Did the young lady who claims to be your daughter bring *this* with her?"

"She did. She even took particular pains to call my attention to how nice she had kept it."

"Just so. Miss Virgie Fulton possesses one like it, I suppose?"

"Certainly not. Their circumstances, unfortunately, are such that they cannot indulge in expensive clothing. As I may have mentioned, heretofore, I have frequently been called upon to assist them out of financial straits."

"Yet, since my arrival in New York I have had occasion to rescue Miss Fulton from being trampled under horse's feet, near the post-office, on Broadway. At that time she wore an elegant sealskin ulster!"

"Are you sure?"

"Positive, as I took particular notice that it was an exceptionally handsome garment."

"But you are sure it *was* Virgie Fulton?"

"I am. She gave me her card, and afterward, at her mother's house, she recognized me as the party who had rescued her. Up to this time I had neglected to examine her card, but, upon consulting it, I found that it bore her name and address."

The broker's face hardened in expression.

"This strengthens my suspicions that you are right more than all else," he said, "for there were few garments in New York like Violet's. Go ahead, detective, and run the matter out, and you'll never have cause to regret it, I'll swear."

"You'll maintain the silence I requested?"

"I will."

"Then I will go at the case with renewed vigor, and in a few days, at the furthest, look out for an explosion."

"Very well. I shall anxiously await the result."

The two shook hands and departed in separate directions.

"I've sized the game down to the sticking point," Dick reflected, as he strode along, "and now for the grand wind-up! Bold as has been this conspiracy, and cunning as has been the scheme, it has fallen to my lot, and I a stranger in a strange city, to beat the race!"

Then to the nearest telegraph office he went, and sent the following message:

"To MISS LEROY, Vassar College:

"Poughkeepsie, N. Y.:—

"Come to New York by early train to-morrow, and put up at the Gilsey House. Don't fail. Matter of gravest importance to Miss Vance."

"R. BRISTOL, Detective."

CHAPTER XIII.

RATS AGAIN SCORES A HIT.

WHEN Rats left Deadwood Dick he was in excellent humor. What with a good suit of clothes upon his back and a good square meal within him, why shouldn't he be?

Brought up in the streets of the great metropolis, and forced to earn his own living, he had never known what it was to wear good clothes or partake of a sumptuous repast.

But, now that he had struck a streak of good luck, he felt literally like a fighting-cock.

"That Deadwood Dick is jest the gallusdest cove I ever run across," he muttered, as he betook himself up-town, "and ef I don't do the best I can for him, may I never smell beefsteak and onions again! Lordy gracious! When I've been sittin' on a sunny door-step, tryin' to keep it warm, while I read 'bout the chap, how little did I ever think I'd ever see him heer in New York! But I hev, an' he's jest as white as he's pictured."

"Well, now, I s'pose I must hunt up Bum Boston, and if I ever get my lookers on him ag'in he won't scape me so easy as he did before. Don't think I'll go nosin' around Old Mag's, till I've reconnoitered in other localities. Strikes me that Twenty-eighth and Sixth avenue is about the place for me visit."

And to that locality he wandered, and as he meandered up the avenue, he saw Pote, the game-legged 'bouncer,' and several other horse touts, standing on the corner.

"Hillo, Georgie!" Rats saluted. "Playin' the races at Guttensburg, to day?"

"No. Haven't got any money," the impecunious would-be sporting gent replied. "Say, Johnny, just run across the street and buy me a cigar. I'll make it right to you, next winner!"

"Git out! That won't be 'til the flowers bloom ag'in. I know you, Potey!"

"You're a young vagabond!" Pote growled. "Where'd you get all your good clothes? I haven't read of a fire!"

"Them ain't fire clothes!" Rats proudly declared. "I picked a winner. That's how I got 'em. Say, but I'll tell ye where ye kin make a haul by 'toutin' Potey."

"Where?" and the bow-legged bouncer was on the *qui vive* in an instant, for "steering" greenhorns onto bad snaps, in horse-races, was a part of his profession.

"Why, there's a feller down the avenue, with a barrel of money, and he's neck-chuck on the bet. I picked him up, or rather he picked me, and you see the results, don't you?" and Rats looked at his clothes complacently.

"Who is he? What does he look like? Bring him up here, boy!" Pote cried, all in a breath.

"Oh! he's a purty fly chap," Rats allowed, "and he wears his hair long, like Beefalo Bull. You've seen him. He's the chap what laid Bum Boston out!"

"Then, you needn't bring him!" Pote hastily declared. "We've got enough of him around here."

And Rats laughed heartily, as the "bouncer" hobbled away in disgust.

All day long the juvenile detective haunted the vicinity, and it was not until night was closing in that his vigilance was rewarded by seeing a man get off a street-car and enter the policy-shop, once before mentioned.

The man was Bill Bruno.

Not Bill Bruno roughly dressed and fiercely bewiskered, but Bill Bruno dandily attired and smoothly shaven.

In appearance, he was a cross between a successful turf sport and a priest—for truly, his smoothly-shaven mug had a ministerial aspect, were it not for the blooming blossom upon the end of his nose.

Nevertheless, Rats recognized him in an instant.

"Oh, jimminy! but *ain't* he a swell, tho'?" the boy commented. "Ther events of last night hev made a powerful big change in us! Guess Bum an' the capt'n must hev made a divide of the boodle, last evenin', by the looks o' things. Now, then, Mr. Bum Boston Billyus Bruno, Eskwire, ye wanten look out fer yourself! I'm hotter enter yer trail than a bulldog after a sky-poodle, or a deestric attorney after a boodle alderman, who ain't rich, like Jacob the Sharp. Bet a bannanner ag'in, an April kite I don't lose yer ag'in!"

Imbued with genuine admiration of his new-found friend, Deadwood Dick, Rats was all enthusiasm, and, backed by a superiority of grit acquired from gutter associations, he meant to give the "tough" a hard chase before losing sight of him.

Like a shadow he hung around the immediate neighborhood of the policy-shop.

Night came on, but the sky was clear and starlit, and when the round globe of Luna soared up into the heavens, its brilliant rays bathed the metropolis in a swathe of mellow radiance, that seemed to put even the electric lights to shame.

Still, Rats haunted the vicinity of the policy-shop, the very impersonation of tireless vigilance. It was after seven o'clock, and consequently after the last drawing had come in, when Bum Boston emerged from the policy-shop.

His face betokened that he was in good spirits. Mayhap he had struck a lucky pick of numbers?

At any rate, he did not linger in the vicinity, but struck through Twenty-ninth street to Broadway, and thence down the great thoroughfare, with Rats close at his heels.

At 24th street he turned over into Madison Square, where he walked along very leisurely.

The night was so pleasant, and the weather so mild, that many of the seats along the winding walks were occupied.

Especially were those perennial people numerous, who, through lack of the price of a night's lodging, are wont to "carry the banner" through the long weary hours of the night.

In due time Bruno reached a settee, somewhat isolated from the others. This settee was occupied by a veiled lady, who wore a sealskin ulster. Without hesitation, Bruno sat down beside her.

At almost the same instant, Rats was lying on the grass, immediately behind the settee, apparently sound asleep, and so well was he enveloped in the shadow cast by a tree, that there was little danger of his being discovered.

With ears on the alert, he prepared to listen. "Well, Virgie, what's the news? How's things going?" Bruno demanded.

"Very smoothly. I have succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. He was mighty glad to welcome me, even at so big a cost, and I am now monarchess of all I survey. You would be surprised to see how well I played my role, from the start, and how aptly I fill the vacancy. I am elated at my success. How is Violet?"

"Oh! so far as health is concerned, she's all right, but she seems to be sort of pining away. If she outlives the trip to Algiers I shall be greatly surprised."

"Well, if she don't live it out, I shall be so much the safer!" was the heartless reply. "Now that I have won my way into a magnificent home and prospective fortune, I wouldn't be dispossessed for worlds. Where is Felix?"

"Give it up. It's a conundrum to me. Haven't seen him since last night."

"How about the money? You received it?"

"Oh! yes. Felix and I squared accounts on shipboard."

"But, where's my divy to come in?"

"You'll have to go to Felix for that. I've got my whack out of it, and that's all I know about it."

"But, why hasn't Felix come to me?" persisted the woman. "You don't suppose he would play up crooked, do you?"

"No, though but for the forgery he is preparing, I wouldn't trust him far. He is too fly a rooster to jeopardize himself at this stage of the game!"

"I should think so. If he ever goes back on me, it were better he had never been born!" Virgie hissed. "He it was who brought me into this daring scheme, and must see me through. When does the ship sail?"

"It was to have sailed to-morrow, but, by Felix's orders, it may not sail for some days, yet. He's hatching up some new scheme, I reckon!"

"He should have come at once to me, with my share of the money!" Virgie declared, passionately. "It is not using me at all right, to thus neglect me. Does he visit the ship often?"

"Twice a day. In the morning, and at night—seven and seven o'clock, as a rule!"

"And sees Violet?"

"Certainly. I hope you're not jealous?"

"I don't know but I've cause to be. Perhaps he is planning to leave us in the lurch after all."

"How do you mean?" and Bill Bruno's voice took on a ring of menace.

"I mean that Felix has admittance to Vance's safe, and has charge of much of his business. He may already have perpetrated the forgery, realized on it, and the amount thus realized, added to what money my uncle usually carries in his safe, would make him well heeled."

"That's a fact!" Bruno growled.

"After making this haul," continued Virgie, "what would be easier than for him to skip aboard the vessel and order it off to sea? Once in a foreign land he could negotiate for the return of Vance's daughter on his own hook, and place us both in the clutches of the law. See?"

Bruno uttered an oath.

"I'm not blind!" he growled, "and I'll be tee-totally cussed if there ain't some pretty good horse sense in what you have said. Curse it, if I really believed he'd play us such a shabby trick I'd strangle him!"

"Well, it won't do any harm to keep a close watch on him. Do you think he will board the ship to-morrow morning at seven?"

"Most likely."

"Where is it anchored?"

"In mid-stream, almost in a direct line with Rector street."

"Let me see. What's her name? I have really forgotten it."

"The Rienzi. You hadn't better attempt to board her, however. I'll be on the alert, and if an attempt is made to beat us, Felix Franks will find himself in hot water."

"Very well, I will leave it all to you, then. But, on first confirmation of a suspicion that Felix intends to leave us in the lurch, you must notify me, for I'll kill him before he shall desert me."

"All right! I'll be on the watch and report when anything happens. You'd better go back to Vance's now, lest your absence create suspicion."

"Yes, I'll go. When shall I see you again?"

"I'll pass this point to-morrow night at about this time."

"Then I'll be here. But, in case I should want to communicate with you, where will a telegram reach you?—at the Hester street place?"

"No, I'm putting up at Taylor's Hotel, in Jersey City, under the name of Robert Robertson."

"Very well. By the way, what has become of that long-haired fellow, Bristol?"

Bill Bruno smiled knowingly.

"You'll never see him again!" he observed.

"He went prying around Mag's castle for pointers and got pinched. There will never be anything more to be feared from him, you bet!"

Virgie, debased as she was, could not repress a shudder.

"She did not kill him I hope?" she said.

"Dunno as to that!" Bruno replied, "but she told me he wouldn't do any more spying."

The two then arose and left the Park, each going in a different direction.

Rats followed Bruno, for it was clear to him that Virgie was going to the Vance residence.

Clear to Taylor's Hotel, in Jersey City, did the young sleuth shadow his game; and then, as there seemed nothing more to do in this direction, he returned to New York, and began a search for Deadwood Dick.

He encountered that individual in front of the Bartholdi, reading a message he had just obtained from the hotel office.

The message was from the conductor of the train that had brought Violet Vance to New York, and read as follows:

"Have made thorough inquiries, and elicited no facts. The young lady was met by a gentleman, and went away in a hack. Same hack took baggage. The hack was none of the 'stand' hacks, in the neighborhood of the depot."

Dick had just finished reading this message when he felt a tap on his shoulder, and beheld Rats at his side.

"Ah! is it you, Rats? Well, what luck?"

"Bully luck, Dick! Come over into Madison Square, and I'll tell yer!"

They crossed 23d street, into the Square, and found an isolated seat.

Then, briefly, tersely, but without missing an important bit of information, Rats related his recent experiences.

When he had finished, Dick patted his apprentice affectionately upon the head.

"Rats," he said, "you're sharper than I gave you credit for being, and sharper even than the rodent that bears your singular name. Henceforth, you and I travel together, inseparable, until the Great Reaper comes to cut one or both of us down. You have done better than I could have done myself, and the value I place upon your services you shall know shortly."

"You say the ship, whereon Violet Vance is a prisoner, is located pretty near opposite Rector street?"

"That's w'at Bum said."

"Do you know where Rector street is?"

"Guess I orter. Sixth Avenue Elevated stops thar."

"Very well. It isn't far from the river I judge?"

"Only a few blocks."

"Well, we must set out, now. The moonlight is very bright, and we ought to be able to locate the ship, eh?"

"Sure."
 "Rats, we must board the Rienzi to-night, and rescue Violet Vance!"
 "Kerect, boss! I'm right 'long side o' yer, and don't yer forget it!"
 "But, Rats, we may not find it an easy job. We may have to fight. Have you got any grit?"
 "Have I? Well, a little! If I hadn't, I couldn't 'a' been a gutter-snipe from infancy up to date, without gettin' many a thrashin', and I never got did up yet, by any kid of my size, though some of the bigger 'uns have give me some purty hard raps, you can bet!"
 "Well, as long as you've got spunk you're solid. Here is one of my revolvers. Put it in your pocket, but use it only when I tell you to. Come, now! It's getting late! We must away to the river front!"

CHAPTER XIV. TO THE RESCUE.

WITHIN half an hour Dick and Rats were at the North River front, on a line with Rector street.

The night was a beautiful one for the last month of the year.

Luna sent down her most brilliant rays upon the tripler of cities and the majestic Hudson was a glittering panorama of white ripples.

The shrieks of the tug-boat whistles were, in the main, all that disturbed the peace of the tranquilly glorious scene.

Over across the river, the lights of Jersey City were like twinkling stars; out at anchor, a considerable number of craft floated gracefully.

The waters lashed the abutments of the wharver with a musical ripple, and the stiff west breeze sent the colors of an English merchantman flying in a homeward direction.

There were several 'longshoremen, a policeman, and a night-watch, lounging about the wharf when Dick and Rats arrived, and after the two sleuths had viewed the scene for some minutes, Dick called the officer aside and showed him his shield.

The "cop" immediately became all attention.

"There's a ship out there," Dick said, "that I desire to visit. There's a mystery connected with it that I am to investigate. Will you tell me which one is the Rienzi?"

"Well, I can't tell you exactly, but I can find out. I reckon it's the Italian bark."

The officer then went and consulted one of the 'longshoremen.

"It's the devil's own vessel, as I thought," he said on his return. "Shure it's me eye I've had on it, for a week now."

"But," persisted Dick, "what kind of a vessel is she—what's her name?"

"Me boy, she's what's called what the dogs do—a bark, wid a 'q.' to it. She's the one you're afther, shure."

"But, which one?"

The officer indicated the vessel he meant, adding:

"You'd better not be afther goin' aboard her alone. Them Italians are worse than a Chinese fer carryin' a knife."

"Perhaps you are right, and it is not my intention to go alone, if I can quietly get assistance, without creating an alarm. The case is this: A young lady is held a prisoner on that boat, and is about to be carried to foreign lands against her will. The conspirators are not on the boat, and that is why I don't want any alarm. The rescue must be conducted quietly, and an officer stationed to see that no communication is exchanged with the Rienzi for at least twenty-four hours. I want two officers, and a half-dozen hardy fellows to accompany me. The pay will be ten dollars per man, and the work but a matter of a few minutes. Can you fix it for me?"

The officer glanced at his watch, reflectively.

"I can!" he said. "Wait a bit."

And he hurried away.

He soon returned, however, accompanied by another cop of huge proportions.

"We'll see yez through, me boy!" the smaller officer said, "an' the boys here, will go along."

A three-oared boat was soon procured and manned and the party then set out for the Italian barque, which rode silently at anchor, half a mile away.

The vessel was soon reached and immediately boarded, without trouble, the watch chancing to be asleep at his post.

The big policeman, whose name was Harry Graham, was not long in arousing the watch,

and authoritatively ordered him to go and fetch the ship's captain on deck.

The captain soon appeared, accompanied by the first-mate.

Both proved to be Americans, and not bad-looking fellows, at that.

"What's the matter here?" the captain demanded. "How is it you come aboard my ship without leave?"

"We come invested with the power of United States officers!" Deadwood Dick said, stepping forward, and displaying his badge. "We have caught you in a very unpleasant business proceeding, but if you act sensibly, you will be allowed to set sail at once and get out of port. Otherwise, in the name of the law, we shall have to take possession of the craft and put you under arrest!"

"What do you mean?" the captain demanded, changing color.

"I mean!" replied Deadwood Dick, "that you have been hired to transport a young lady to Algiers, against her own wishes—to kidnap her."

"But, sir, the young lady is weak-minded and her father is to accompany her."

"Nothing of the sort. The young lady is of one of the best families in New York, and has been kidnapped for money-making purposes. I demand, sir, that you surrender her to my custody!"

The captain looked astounded.

"Certainly!" he said. "If what you say be true, you shall have her. She was brought to me by a man who represented himself to be her father. He said she was weak-minded and, at times, subject to fits of insanity, and ordered her kept confined until we were out of port. As he paid me for the trip in advance, I had no idea but what all was right. Douglass"—turning to the mate—"go fetch up the young lady, prepared to leave the ship."

Douglass disappeared, and in five minutes returned, leading Violet Vance by the hand.

The girl was very pale, but Deadwood Dick had no difficulty in recognizing her.

She was plainly attired, yet as beautiful as an houri.

"This is Miss Violet Vance, I believe?" Dick said, stepping forward.

"Yes, sir," was the eager reply. "Oh, sir, is it true you have come to rescue me?"

"That's what we're here for," Dick declared. "So cheer up, for I'll soon restore you to your father."

"May God bless you if you do!" was the fervent reply.

Dick then turned to the captain.

"Is there anything to prevent your leaving port at once?" he asked.

"No," was the reply.

"Then I'd advise you to git up and git! Although I do not propose to press a case against you, I don't know what the New York authorities may do when this affair leaks out."

"I reckon I won't run any chances," the captain replied. "Although I'm innocent of any complicity in this business, I reckon I'd better sail."

The rescuing party then returned to New York, the number in the boat being reinforced by Violet.

Naturally, both Dick and Rats were jubilant over their success.

When the New York side was reached, Dick paid off the officers and 'longshoremen, and cautioning the former to temporary silence, secured a cab, and he, Rats, and Violet, started for the Gilsey House, where Dick proposed to have the rescued girl temporarily remain.

En route, Dick tersely but clearly explained to the young lady the circumstances with which our readers are familiar, and what he proposed to do, on the morrow.

Very naturally Violet was astounded, but her gratitude toward the detective was so sincere, that she readily consented to become his partner in the plans for the *denouement*.

In turn, she gave him an account of her capture, and her story corresponded with the one Virgie Fulton had told Roger Vance, with the single exception that, instead of Mr. Vance's lawyer meeting her at the depot, it was Felix Franks who had performed the mission; and it was Felix Franks who had held the conversation with Violet, outside the gates of Vassar College, as mentioned by Miss Leroy, in a previous chapter.

When Miss Vance was comfortably installed at the Gilsey, Dick and Rats bade her good-night, and took their departure.

Early the next day, Deadwood Dick held a confidential interview with Roger Vance, at his office, in Bond street.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

DEAR reader, the closing scene of our little drama of real life gathers practically, in the handsomely-furnished parlor of Roger Vance's residence on Lexington avenue.

It was high noon of the day following Violet's rescue from the Italian barque Rienzi.

Four persons were seated in the parlor—Roger Vance, Deadwood Dick, Rats, and Miss Lena Leroy, of Vassar.

Mr. Vance had been busy writing for some minutes, at an *escritoire*, but finally looked up, after laying aside his pen and glancing at his watch.

"Well, I guess everything is in readiness," he said. "You are ready, I suppose, detective?"

"I am," Dick replied. "The sooner we get through with this business the better. I've prepared everything, so there's no danger of any kinks."

"Very well," and the broker's face assumed a stern expression. "I will summon Miss Fulton."

He touched a bell, and a servant immediately appeared.

"Scott, please inform Miss Vance that a lady wishes to see her here," the broker ordered.

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, and he departed.

It was fully five minutes ere the door again opened, and Virgie Fulton, elegantly attired, entered the parlor.

She gave a bewildered glance about the room, and then turned pale, as her gaze rested upon the handsome face of Deadwood Dick.

She quickly averted her face, however, and turned to Mr. Vance.

"Did you send for me, papa?" she interrogated.

"Yes, Violet," the broker replied. "Pray be seated."

The pseudo-Violet suuk into an easy-chair and fixed her startled eyes upon Lena Leroy.

"You do not seem to recognize your old friend, my dear," the broker went on.

"My old friend!" ejaculated Virgie, in assumed astonishment. "To whom do you refer?"

"To the young lady here. Surely you have not forgotten her so soon?"

"Forgot her? Why, papa, I never saw the young woman before in my life. Why, what do you mean? Who is she? I don't understand what you mean."

"I am surprised. I thought you Vassar girls all knew one another, daughter?"

"So we did. But this girl was not in Vassar, I am positive. She is an impostor."

"On the contrary, she is not," the broker said, calmly. "She brings me a letter of introduction from the professor."

Virgie turned deathly pale at this.

"I—I'm sure I can't understand this," she faintly articulated. "I am sure I never saw this girl before."

"If you are whom you claim to be, you certainly must know me," Miss Leroy spoke up, rather severely. "I was Miss Violet Vance's bosom companion all the time she was at Vassar. I was not only her class-mate, but her room-mate, and we were fast friends. If you have forgotten Lena Leroy in the very short time we have been separated, you are not the daughter of Mr. Roger Vance."

The face of a corpse could not have been more deathly than that of Virgie Fulton as she heard these words.

But the color quickly mounted to her temples, and she arose with assumed indignation—or perhaps it was rage born of guilt.

"I will not listen to another word of this libelous slander!" she cried, passionately, backing toward the door. "This thing"—pointing to Lena—"is a vile impostor, and with some mercenary motive is endeavoring to poison your minds against me. If you choose to listen to the viper you can do so;—I, for one, choose more eligible company!"

She turned, then, to depart, but found Deadwood Dick at the door, with his back planted firmly against it.

"Pray be seated, Miss Virgie Fulton," he said, calmly. "There is no use of your being in a hurry. The game is blocked, as you must by this time realize, and the only thing sensible for you to do is to give in beaten at all points."

"I have the honor of saying that I have exposed the whole fraud, in all its villainy, and I am surprised that you, a girl of refinement and respectability, should have ever entered into such a diabolical conspiracy, with such a contemptible scoundrel as Franks. Still, despite

your sinfulness, Mr. Vance is not disposed, as I understand, to push the case against you, hoping that this bitter failure may teach you a lesson you will never forget.

"The innocent girl whom you, for sordid gain, were willing to consign to a horrible captivity among the savages of a foreign clime, has, thanks to my young detective apprentice, been released from the vessel, Rienzi, and is now in this house. Would you like to see her?"

"No! no! no!" almost screamed the baffled girl, bursting into tears, and covering her face with her hands. "Oh! for the love of God, let me go—let me go away from here!"

"Not yet, Miss Fulton. We want you here, yet awhile!" Dick replied, with decision.

"Your lover will be here, soon, and we want you to confront him, and shame him for drawing an innocent fly into his spider's network of villainy. Do you think you can do it?"

"I wish he were dead!" was the bitter reply, "for, but for his oily tongue I'd not be the wretched being I am, now!"

"Well, if you behave yourself, in the future, you'll have a chance to reform!" Mr. Vance spoke up. "By rights, you deserve to go to State's Prison. But for Detective Bristol, I might never have known but what you were really my daughter, when my own darling child was languishing in captivity in a foreign land. Were I to turn this case over to the authorities I do not know what they would do to you. Certain it is you would have a long term in State's Prison. I am of a forgiving disposition however, and out of respect for my cousin, your good mother, whom you have so basely deceived and disgraced, I do not propose to deal harshly with you. My new partner, Mr. Steele Standish, however, has found that Felix Franks has attempted to pass a forged check on my credit, and he will be summarily dealt with. After he has served his term for forgery, I shall perhaps take up the other case. You, after confronting him with his villainy, can return to your mother!"

"No! no! I never can face her again!" Virgie sobbed. "I am ruined for life. It was not all my fault, Mr. Vance. I own that I was a little vain, and my position would not warrant me in catering to my ambition for being a fine society lady. The tempter, knowing my weakness, came, and I fell. I do not ask you to forgive me, since you have been so kind as to not arrest me. I do hope, though, for the love of God, that you will keep this from my dear mother, lest it break her poor heart, for I will never sin again!"

"Your mother knows all, my child!" replied a gentle voice, as Mrs. Fulton emerged from the back parlor, and placed her hand upon her offspring's head. "As much as your wicked act has grieved me, the heart of your mother, who has ever tenderly cared for you, goes out to you in pity, and I freely forgive you. In saying this, I think I speak the sentiment of every one in the room!"

There was an instant of silence; then a chorus of voices responded:

"Amen!"

"And I forgive you, too, Virgie," said a soft voice, as gentle Violet glided from the rear parlor, and clasped her sinful cousin's hands in her own. "Come with me, dear, and cheer up. The world will be bright for you yet, if you indeed, henceforth, shall be worthy of your name."

Virgie utterly broke down at this, and sobbing hysterically, was led from the room by Violet and Mrs. Fulton.

Just then Steele Standish entered the parlor. "Franks will be here in a couple of minutes!" he said. "Is all in readiness?"

"All O. K.!" Deadwood Dick replied. "Have you got the warrant?"

"Yes. Here it is."

"Very well! I shall have the honor of putting Mr. Felix Franks under arrest. All be seated, please."

The detective then arose and took a position near the hall door.

Inside of five minutes the door-bell rung and Dick opened it, keeping himself, however, out of sight.

Felix Franks stepped boldly into the hall, then into the parlor, whereupon Dick closed the door, and locked it, putting the key in his pocket.

"Did you send for me, Mr. Vance?" Felix asked, staring at the people present.

"No, sir," the broker replied. "Mr. Bristol, the detective, sent for you!"

Franks wheeled around, with an oath, and an instant later found himself handcuffed.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"Why am I thus insulted in my employer's house?"

"It means!" coolly replied Deadwood Dick, "that you are my prisoner—that you are put under arrest, for forging Mr. Vance's name on a five thousand dollar check. There are more serious charges against you, but forger, owing to Mr. Vance's leniency, is the first you will be charged with. After that, you will very likely do time for abducting Mr. Vance's daughter!"

"It's false! false as hell!" Franks cried, furiously. "This is utter blackmail. I know nothing of Vance's daughter!"

"It is true!" Violet cried, emerging from the back parlor, "and I am here to prove it!"

"Yes, and I am here to back her assertion!" cried Virgie, also springing out of the back parlor.

Franks turned deathly pale, and reeled as though he had been struck a heavy blow.

"This is infamous!" he gasped. "I owe it all to you!" he added, fiercely facing Deadwood Dick.

"Well, to some extent, you do owe your defeat to me, Franks," Dick replied. "I am happy to say that I have been the means of frustrating your diabolical scheme. When Mr. Vance placed the case in my hands, I went at it with a determination to win. I may say, that, after my first glimpse of you, I was satisfied that you were a scoundrel of the first water, and I had you watched. As a result, I have found you out in the fullest particular, and you are my prisoner—as mean a rogue—as detestable a man—as I ever put shackles on. But, your jig is up; you'll never again disgrace your father's name with your infamous rascality, for Sing Sing will protect the world from your presence."

Dear reader, little more needs to be added.

Through the agency of Deadwood Dick, the whole plot had been exploded and exposed, and the chief offender in thirty days' time was in Sing Sing. But Bum Boston was not to be found when called for. He had evidently got wind of forthcoming events and left New York at once.

Virgie returned to her mother; Violent married Steele Standish, and Deadwood Dick and Rats, after receiving a princely recompense, became pards in more ways than one, as we shall see.

THE END.

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